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Photo Lizzie Orme

Welcome

Summer is well and truly on its way now, so there's no better time to turn your attention to **improving your outdoor space**. In our home improvement feature on page 106 we take a look at **projects big and small, to make your garden a nicer place to be**. While on page 66 we have an **easy step-by-step project for laying a smart new gravel path**. No matter what size your outdoor space, there's always room for a few plants in containers, and on page 114 we've got lots of expert advice to help you **bring a splash of colour to your garden, patio or balcony**.



This month our Craft Editor Sophie has created some pretty and practical projects to make laundry less of a drag (p.60).



Turn to p.100 for some delicious, nutritious recipes from our favourite healthy cooks, such as Madeleine Shaw.

If the warmer weather and longer, lighter evenings have inspired you to do a spot of redecorating, then before you start check out our feature on page 36 for the **stylist's secrets that will help you achieve a designer look on a budget**. And make sure you take a look at our **gorgeous makeovers** (p.24) and **fabulous homes** (p.73) in this issue for plenty of **real-life inspiration** from readers just like you. If, like the *Your Home* team, you're trying to **eat more healthily**, then I know you'll love our recipes this month (p.100). Not only do they **taste great**, but they may even help you **get a healthy glow and a bikini body** in time for your summer holidays, what's not to love?

Go digital...

Download our app version for your mobile, tablet or PC and you can take *Your Home* with you on the go. See page 86.



Finally, we've got some **amazing competitions** in this issue. You could win a fantastic **smart security package from Yale worth £2,000** (p.56) or a new **Baxi boiler worth £2,500** (p.110). Good luck!

Anna-Lisa

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Call 01206 851117 to order back copies

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Feature Laura McLeish

Create your own wonderland

This year marks 150 years since Lewis Carroll wrote the classic story, Alice in Wonderland, and introduced us all to the mystical world at the bottom of the rabbit hole. Celebrate by treating yourself to a piece of kitsch nostalgia that will take you right back to your childhood. Our favourites include these illustrated teacups and prints that would make quirky additions to your home. Or if you've always fancied yourself as the Queen of Hearts, this table made from giant playing cards will make a fantastic talking point with your tea party guests.

Teacup and saucer, £29.50 each; **Queen print,** £14; **White rabbit print,** £14, all Mrs Moore's Vintage Store. **Cartina playing card side table,** £170, Out There Interiors







This month *we love...*

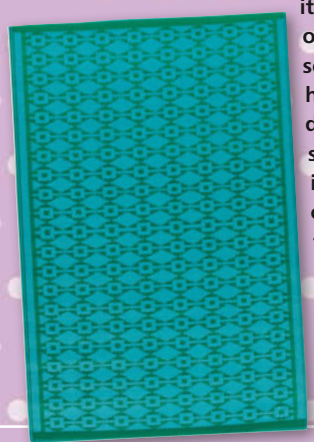
Make the most of May with the best things to do, see and buy this month

For stockists see page 120

Picnic perfect

Even if your idea of a picnic is a sandwich in the local park, there's no reason why you shouldn't have some stylish accessories to make it a special occasion. This season, Habitat has some great dining and food storage pieces in vibrant, on-trend colours to make sure your picnics are ones to remember. We have our eye on this open rattan basket and peacock-coloured picnic blanket that are both practical and perfect for spontaneous trips.





Attica picnic rug, £20; **Frossell basket**, £25, both Habitat



Hidden gem: Bird's Yard

Bird's Yard started out life in Leeds back in 2010 before being handpicked by retail queen, Mary Portas, to move to Sheffield two years later as part of her bursary scheme. Fast forward to 2015 and the store is going from strength to strength, selling a mixture of locally designed and globally-sourced homeware, clothing and jewellery. You'll find lots of upcoming designers here as owner Michelle, nicknamed Bird, offers low rent on space in the store in exchange for the designers helping out front of house each month. Whether you're looking for retro homeware or novelty gifts, you can be sure to find it here. Visit the shop at 44 Chapel Walk, Sheffield, S1 2PD or www.birdsyardsheffield.co.uk.



Coffee break

4th-10th May is National Coffee Week, so make sure you get your caffeine kick with these great accessories



▶ **Declare your love of coffee with this quirky print**

Of Life & Lemons 'Give enough coffee' print, £15, Notonthehighstreet



◀ **Drink your coffee on the go with this cute reusable cup with lid**

Byocup, £11.95, Onya Bags



▲ **These personalised stencils would make a great gift for any coffee lover**

Personalise coffee stencil, £12.50, Sophia Victoria Joy



◀ **Make the most of your morning brew with this pretty mug**

Kebava mug, £10, Anthropologie



▶ **Use this enamel coffee pot for lazy weekend breakfasts**

Dexham Vintage Home coffee, £19, www.onlinekitchenware.co.uk

Get inspired

For the green-fingered among us, May can mean only one thing – the start of the garden festival season. Kick this year off with a trip to the RHS Malvern Spring Festival, taking place from Thursday 7th - Sunday 10th May. There will be lots of show-stopping gardens to look around and take inspiration from for your own outdoor space, and for foodies, the food and drink side of the show continues to grow, with lots of artisan producers and chef Raymond Blanc making an appearance.



Reader treat

READER TREAT We have three pairs of day tickets, for use on the day of your choice, to give away. To enter, send your name, address and contact details to Your Home RHS ticket giveaway, HBM UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9HU before 30th April 2015.

Shake up your ceramics



Known for her quirky ceramics, Hannah Turner has launched yet another cute collection that's perfect for spring and will add a bit of magic to your meal times. The toadstool range features her usual plates, coasters and storage jars, as well as this mismatched set of salt and pepper shakers that you'll want to have out on display at every opportunity. Hannah's retro-inspired colour palettes and charming illustrations mean this collection would be right at home amongst vintage kitchenalia but would also perk up a plainer, modern kitchen if that's more your thing.

Salt and pepper shakers, £17.99; **storage jar**, £29.99, both Hannah Turner



Prints charming

Norfolk-based company, Izzi Rainey, only launched last year, but its fun designs have already caught our eye. Art graduate Izzi's hand-printed motifs still look just as rustically home-made once they're digitally printed and made into everything from lampshades to greeting cards. What's more, everything is produced and manufactured in the UK, so you'll be supporting home-grown talent too.



Cushions, from £48; **notebooks**, £4 each, both Izzi Rainey

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Your letters

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Laura x

Editorial Assistant

A new lease of life



Q As a child I remember my gran having a big blanket box in her bedroom. When she sadly passed away in 2006 I inherited it and had great intentions to return it to its former glory. Over the years, and four house moves later, 'that manky box' became a laughing stock amongst the family – it was falling apart, but still I insisted on keeping it. Then, one day, I acquired some lovely thick Clarke & Clarke fabric for free, and in less than 24 hours I transformed it! I've had so many lovely comments and it now sits proudly in my bedroom. Thanks *Your Home* for the inspiration!
Suzy Clarke, via email



A ***Your Home says*** **Your gran's blanket box is almost unrecognizable, Suzy! It's so lovely that you've managed to keep this in the family and a real bonus that you were able to completely transform it for free. Great job!**

Out with the old, in with the new

We recently moved from a gorgeous, characterful older house to a lovely, but plain, new-build. As a lover of period features and vintage charm I was struggling to work out how to inject similar character into our new home. Imagine my delight to see newer properties featured in the February 2015 issue! In particular I will be borrowing many of Jane Day's ideas [on page 80] as she has created such a charming home in her own modern property. Thanks *Your Home* for showing that with a little imagination and creativity, every house, regardless of age, can be packed with character.
Casey Trueman, via email

Your Home says **Thanks so much for your feedback, Casey. We're sure a lot of our readers have the same problem and hopefully that issue provided lots of ideas to bring a newer home to life. We hope you enjoy our reader homes just as much this issue!**

Get online

Tweet us your pictures and comments @your_home or like our Facebook page www.facebook.com/yourhomemag

Purrfect project

Q After seeing the adorable cat draught excluder Sew Simple project in the November issue of *Your Home*, I knew that I had to make one for my home. I used pastel-coloured fabrics in a mixture of florals, spots and stripes and finished the cats off with brightly-coloured ribbons for collars. I hope you'll agree that it looks great! I've now subscribed to *Your Home* as it's always full of tips and inspiration.
Goretti Noble, Belfast

A ***Your Home says*** **Our Craft Editor, Sophie, thought you did a fantastic job! It's always lovely to see readers trying out any of the projects or ideas in the magazine and it really makes our job worthwhile. Make sure you let us know about any other projects you try your hand at, Goretti!**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Thank you so much for your spare room makeover feature in the February issue. Since my daughter left for university her bedroom has become a messy storage room. I had half-formed ideas of turning it into a study, but lacked the inspiration until a colleague suggested *Your Home*. My daughter and I have been really inspired by the feature, so much so that plans have already been drawn up and colour schemes agreed upon! We can't wait to get started on the decorating.
Debra Waudby, York

Your Home says **We're so glad that we were able to help, Debra. It's lovely that you and your daughter are designing the scheme together too. We're sure she'll want to move back in once it's finished!**



Debra's letter won £120 of WallpaperDirect vouchers. Send us your views, thoughts and ideas and you could be next month's winner.



Feature Laura McLeish

SEND YOUR TIPS, PHOTOS AND LETTERS TO:
Letters Editor, Your Home, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex CO4 9HU or email yourhome@burdamagazines.co.uk

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HOW TO... Give your kitchen appliances a health check

☑ **Coffee machine** - A build-up of limescale can not only affect the quality of your coffee, but can extend brewing time and over time damage the working of the machine. Once every three months use a descaler such as Durgol Swiss Espresso, £9.99 for two 125ml single use bottles, available from durgol.co.uk and Amazon.

☑ **Dishwasher** - Clean once a month – remove the drawers and wipe, check the nozzles are clear of debris and clean with a soft toothbrush. Wipe around the inside of the door using an anti-bacterial spray. Check the manufacturer's instructions and take out the filter if it's detachable, usually in the dishwasher floor. Remove any debris and replace. Put the drawers back in. Fill two cups with white vinegar, one for the top drawer, and one for the bottom, then run an empty cycle on a hot wash.

☑ **Fridge freezer** - To test that the seal is shutting tightly, place a sheet of paper in the seal and shut the door. If the paper stays in place it's fine, if it falls down then it's time the seal was replaced. If the coils on the back become too dusty then your fridge freezer won't work as effectively. Unplug then pull it out enough so that you can reach the back to gently vacuum the dust. Use a thermometer to check the temperature – the freezer should be -18ºC, and the fridge below 5ºC.

☑ **Washing machine** - Washing at low temperatures can cause havoc with the insides of your machine. Once a month run the machine empty on the hottest wash. Switch the washing machine off at the plug, then clean around the seal and remove the drawer and give this a scrub, as well as inside the housing for the drawer. Following the manufacturer's instructions, remove the lint filter and give this a clean. Dr. Beckmann have two products which can be used consecutively every couple of months – Service It Washing Machine Cleaner, £2.99, for the areas you can see, and Service-It Deep Clean Washing Machine Cleaner, £2.99, for those you can't.



Laura's choice

'Always on the look out for something that will make chores easier, I'm a fan of Vileda Magical. Simply spray onto bathroom surfaces after cleaning, wipe with the microfibre cloth for a steak-free finish, and you'll be left with a water-repellent layer that will protect surfaces from water marks and limescale for up to seven days. Use on shower screens, sinks, tiles, tubs and taps.'

Vileda Magic, £4.99, stockists include Homebase and Dunelm



Q&A



I love the latest craze for making courgetti but the spiralizers available are so big and I don't have the space in my kitchen. Is there another way of creating spiralized vegetables without one?

The Microplane Spiral Cutter is much more suitable for a small kitchen as it will fit easily into a drawer or cupboard. Designed like a pencil sharpener, there are two razor-sharp slicing barrels, one for slimmer vegetables such as carrots, and another for chunkier veg such as courgette or sweet potato. It's easy to clean and can be popped into the dishwasher.

Microplane Spiral Cutter, £9.95, Steamer Trading

What to look out for THIS MONTH



▲ **Perfect for entertaining, these copper-finish bar accessories will make you look like the hostess with mostest. There is also a wine chiller available in the collection.**

by Sainsbury's copper-finish Champagne and wine bucket, £12; **cocktail shaker**, £7; **ice bucket**, £15, all Sainsbury's

Great buy



Cordless vacuums offer much more flexibility when it comes to cleaning every corner of your home but this new addition to Vax's cordless range gives you even more. The upright stick vacuum quickly transforms into a handheld vacuum – ideal for quickly picking up crumbs in the kitchen, giving upholstery a once over and keeping your car clean. The stick vacuum also has steerable technology which allows you to swivel and turn direction easily, so you can move easily around furniture and chair legs. Using LithiumLife battery technology, it has all the power and suction that you would hope for.

Vax Air Cordless Switch, £179.99



▲ **Gorgeous enough to leave on the worktop, this colander will make a great addition to your kitchen, especially if you already have a collection of copper pans. And the matching utensil holder will keep your surfaces free of clutter.**

Copper utensil holder, £12.99; **Copper colander**, £14.99, both Mia Fleur



◀ **Not only is this recipe stand super-stylish, it will also give you the helping hand you need in the kitchen, freeing-up work space and keeping your cookery books away from any spills while you are using them.**

Recipe stand, £22, Oliver Bonas

We test... low-fat fryers

We tried out a selection of low-fat fryers, here's what we found:...

THINGS WE CONSIDERED
- Was it simple to use and clean?
- How much oil did we have to use?
- How large was it?

RUSSELL HOBBS PURIFRY, £149.99

This fryer was easy to use and cooked both white potato and sweet potato chips in around 30 minutes. We did have to remove the pull-out basket and shake the chips a couple of times during cooking to ensure they cooked evenly, but with just one teaspoon of oil needed, we were really impressed with how crispy they turned out. The two-litre basket is removable and dishwasher-safe, so cleaning was a breeze. It did take up quite a bit of worktop space.



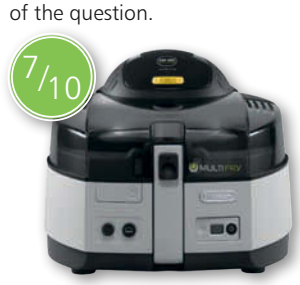
BREVILLE HALO+ HEALTH FRYER, £164.99

This fryer did a fantastic job of cooking a large batch of sweet potato fries, with only a splash of oil. The clever tiliting mechanism ensures that food is evenly cooked, and it can also be used to bake, sauté, grill and roast meat, fish, vegetables and much more. The removable, non-stick bowl is dishwasher-safe and was also very easy to wash by hand. The design is smart and modern, but the green colour may not suit every kitchen scheme. It is a little bulky for kitchens short on space.



DE'LONGHI MULTIFRY CLASSIC, £179.99

This cooked chips really well, evenly and crispy, with about a tablespoon of oil. However, when making bolognese the onion dried out rather than softening and it needed more sauce than usual, something that needs some practice. It was really easy to use and clean with a removable bowl and mixer with no fiddly bits. The appliance is quite big but there's no wasted space and it fitted in to a cupboard. It was fairly noisy though, so a conversation was out of the question.



TEFAL ACTIFRY EXPRESS XL, £249.99

We cooked the maximum amount of chips (1.5kg) using just one spoon of oil in the measurer provided. After 40 minutes they were cooked but not particularly crispy and the rotational wheel made some mushy. It would work better with less inside. However, croutons came out perfectly in just six minutes and you can also cook other things such as vegetables and meat. It was a large appliance but was fairly easy to clean, with some parts dishwasher-safe.



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NEVILLE JOHNSON

DESIGN WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Consumer NEWS

Stay on top of the latest issues and hot topics with our monthly round-up of news

The hostess with the mostest

A survey commissioned by bespoke handmade kitchen company Harvey Jones has revealed some interesting statistics about our habits when hosting and attending dinner parties. Some of the surprising results include the fact that over 43% of hosts prefer alcohol as a gift from guests, with just 14% hoping for something sweet, such as a box of chocolates. 17% of guests dread being sat next to a particular person at the table, while 18% say that their biggest pet peeve is a host trying to pass off shop-bought food as their own home-made creation. When hosting a dinner party, 34% of us are willing to risk trying a new recipe, with the remainder opting to stick with an old favourite to avoid any culinary disasters.



Bank holiday savings



With two much-needed bank holidays in May, it's the perfect time to make the most of the long weekends and head off on some days out. Keep costs down by using your Nectar points – there are some great ways to save. Nectar points can be redeemed on tickets to over 120 attractions across the country, from Go Ape to the Edinburgh Dungeons. Visit http://www.nectar.com/spend/category/days-out.points to see the full list. Points are even worth double at some top attractions. Why not treat the family to a tasty Italian meal while you're out and about? Simply exchange your Nectar points for an eVoucher to spend at PizzaExpress. And don't forget to use your Nectar card when stopping for fuel at BP garages – collecting valuable extra points towards your next day out. Log on to www.nectar.com for more information.

Bright idea

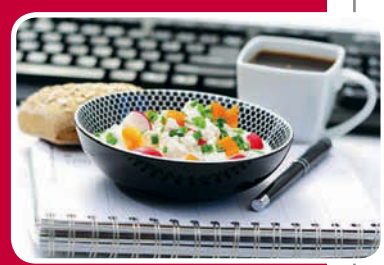
If you've ever trawled the light bulb aisle of your local supermarket or DIY store, you'll know how confusing the choice can be. Next time you need to buy replacements, try using a bulb finder tool such as the one at www.lyco.co.uk/bulb-finder. Search by either bulb shape or cap style, then use the clear diagrams to identify which bulb you need. You will then have all the correct details on hand for next time you're heading to the shops, or you can buy online at www.lyco.co.uk, where you'll find a wide range of shapes and sizes, making bulb buying hassle-free.



Storage stats

A recent survey by mortgage and loan provider Ocean Finance has confirmed that many British homes are bursting at the seams, with one in eight of us having to resort to paying to store our clutter. On average, households are spending £16 per month storing items that they can't fit in their homes and unsurprisingly, the issue is especially prominent in urban areas, where many people live in smaller properties or even shared houses. Additionally, a staggering 51% of those of us with a garage are using it only for storage.

Reclaim your lunch hour



With the average British lunch break lasting just 26 minutes, it seems that the traditional lunch hour is in decline. Research conducted by Leerdammer Light has revealed that 7% of Brits don't take a lunch break, while 40% now take less than 20 minutes and nearly half eat lunch at their desk. 11% claim to work through their lunch just to impress their boss. This lunch hour loss leaves Brits missing out on the equivalent of 19 days of holiday. Leerdammer Light is encouraging the nation to increase its wellbeing at work and make the most of the humble lunch hour, visit www.leerdammer.co.uk for more information.

Feature Lisa Hibberd **Additional images** istock

Consumer news... IN FOCUS

As the holiday season approaches, now's the perfect time to plan your trip and get the most for your money

The cost of holidays has rocketed over recent years, especially during the school summer holidays, so making your money go further is more important than ever. Researching the best deal takes time, so we've done the homework for you and have found all the shortcuts, apps and cost-cutting solutions you need.



Find the best flights

There are plenty of comparison websites that can help you compare the cost of your flight:

✓ www.skyscanner.net compares millions of flights to find you the best deal. It can also search for the cheapest hotels and car hire, linking you through directly, so there are no hidden charges or fees.

✓ www.expedia.co.uk can also search for flight only, hotel only or both together as well as last-minute deals.

✓ Other price comparison sites include www.momondo.com and www.kayak.com.

Get a good hotel deal

There are plenty of hotel price comparison sites too:

- Trivago compares hotel prices from more than 200 booking sites for over 700,000 hotels throughout the world. Visit www.trivago.co.uk.
- Travel Supermarket will compare all the leading hotel sites in one search, including Laterooms.com, Expedia, Lastminute.com and Booking.com.
- Lastminute.com is ideal for something more spontaneous, with the best deals on hotels, flights, city breaks, villas, car hire and even spas, theatres and restaurants.

Package deals

You may prefer to pop to your local travel agent and let someone else do the legwork:

- If you don't want to book your own flight and accommodation online, a tour operator will be able to find you the best deal.
- Package holidays provide an all-in-one service with flights, connections and accommodation.
- Ask about all-inclusive holidays, where all your food, drink and entertainment is also included.
- Package holidays are usually ATOL or ABTA protected, which means if the holiday company fails, you'll either be given a refund or, if you're away, you will be able to complete your trip.

Holiday homes

If you want something more personal than a hotel, self-catering apartment or villa, there are ways to get a real home from home:

✓ With Airbnb (www.airbnb.co.uk), you can rent something really special from local hosts in 190 countries and more than 34,000 cities. You can search, book and pay through the secure website and find everything from an extra room in a host's house or an entire property all to yourself to a stately castle and even an icy igloo!

✓ Home swaps are also a great way to get a cheaper holiday abroad and are ideal during school holidays when hotel prices are hiked up. Most sites do have a membership fee but you can save thousands on the cost of your break, as the accommodation is free. Try Love Home Swap (www.lovehomeswap.com), Knok (www.knok.com) and HomeLink (www.homelink.org.uk).

✓ There are no accommodation or air fare costs if you house swap with UK Holiday Swap Shop (www.ukholidayswapshop.co.uk). Maybe you live by the sea and fancy a country break or you live in the sticks and long for a weekend in the city – a great way to explore the country.

Q Will I save money on a package holiday if I book last-minute?
Katherine Nash, Norfolk

A It is generally cheaper the later you book but you will get a more limited choice in terms of flights and accommodation. If you're flexible with your dates and even destination, this is a great way to save money.

Useful contacts

- **www.moneysavingexpert.com** has plenty of top tips on how to find cheap flights and hotels.
- Find late package deals at **www.thomson.co.uk** with flights leaving in the next six weeks.
- **www.onthebeach.co.uk** is a UK online independent travel agent offering great deals on beach holidays with ABTA protection.
- **www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk** can also help with cutting costs on everything from holiday insurance to travel money.

Feature Hayley Gilbert Image istock

Decorating

Discover stylist secrets to achieve a designer look at home





Feature Laura McLeish

Trend: Botanicals

Get back to nature with the latest trend that really brings the outside in. The designers' colour of choice is green, and depending on how brave you're feeling, you can choose any shade from mint to olive, to suit your style and taste. Team your greens with whites and creams for a classic colonial look, or with black for a cooler, more modern take on the trend. Prints are the main key to this look – think green, leafy plants rather than florals, and don't be afraid to use larger prints as you can tone them down with soft accessories in natural fabrics such as linen. When it comes to accessories, there's an obvious choice – plants, and lots of them. Invest in an on-trend terrarium or fill mismatched vases and glass jars with faux foliage for a striking but low-maintenance look.

Image M&S

A wheel bargain



The salvage trend shows no sign of slowing and you'll definitely keep up-to-speed with this quirky bicycle lamp from Dunelm. The metal frame in the shape of a vintage bike, complete with basket, is both eye-catching and timeless and the grey shade is the perfect, on-trend match. Plus, for only £29.99, you can make a statement for a steal.

Jasper metal bicycle lamp, £29.99, Dunelm



Parquet paradise

Parquet flooring is well and truly back in vogue, but the cost and maintenance is enough to put even the most fashionable of us off. Luckily for us, Leoline has added the Toulouse design to its collection of vinyl floors – a stylish imitation of the wooden herringbone-design floor, without the hefty price tag. What's more, it has a Superguard scuff and mark-resistant finish, so you can rest assured that it will look great for years to come.

Woodmark Toulouse flooring, from £22 per sq m, Leoline

Reader treat

Colour masterclass



If, like us, you've always admired Abigail Ahern's bold sense of style and fearless use of colour, then you'll want to grab yourself a copy of her new book. Abigail Ahern Colour will turn even the biggest neutrals fans into confident colour-lovers. The book talks you through the basics of colour matching and getting the balance just right, before giving you lots of tips and tricks to apply to certain rooms in the house.



We have five copies of the book to give away. To enter send your name, address and contact details to Your Home May Colour giveaway, HBM UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9HU before 31st May 2015.

Abigail Ahern Colour, £20, Quadrille

CHECK OUT OUR NEW DECORATING PAGES AT WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK

TREND ALERT... monochrome

Seeing things in black and white



Feature Laura Higgins **Background wallpaper** Makela Mono wallpaper W530/03, Villa Nova

Monochrome schemes have always been popular in minimalist, Grand Designs-style houses, but this trend has evolved this season to become warmer and more liveable, making it suitable for those of us living in more conservative-sized properties and on a more realistic budget. Done correctly, it's easy to achieve a timeless, chic scheme.

Getting the ratio of black to white balanced, and the lighting correct, are key. If you don't know where to start then choose white for larger areas, such as walls and sofas, then add black accents, and choose soft, off-white lighting for a warm glow, otherwise your décor could be left looking cold and stark.

The first thing to decide on is what kind of scheme you want to go for. There's so much choice for this trend on the high street – you could have a minimal utilitarian scheme, modern geometrics, tribal or an Oriental theme. The choices here are endless.

Whatever you go for it's important to add depth and interest to ensure that your décor doesn't look flat. Create depth with natural warm woods, and a mix of textures, such as gloss, matt and concrete finishes for walls, floors and surfaces, and materials for soft furnishings, such as cotton, woollens and embroideries.

If you are worried that an entirely black and white scheme might be a bit too much for your space then you can soften it with warmer neutrals alongside the whites, and with grey or muted black shades, rather than stronger jet black. Add a shot of colour as well if you like – yellow, pink or teal would work well. Just the odd touch such as a cushion, or some candlesticks and a vase of flowers.

Laura

Lifestyle Editor



Combine traditional toiles with understated Japanese style, for a contemporary Oriental feel

Chunky wood wide table lamp, £99; **Loen dark armchair in Kimi weave charcoal**, £649; **Nayoko three-door sideboard**, £749; **geometric metal candlestick**, £15; **Cyprus floor lamp**, £299; **Geisha cushion**, £15; **geometric pompom cushion**, £25; **Kuro sofa in Malva graphite**, £849; **Kimono print cushion**, £19.50; **Conran Kitson coffee table**, £299; **knitted pouffe**, £89; **spotted Kilim rug**, £169, all M&S





Create a gallery wall with black and white photos and prints

The Man print, £35; **Geometric Alphabet print**, £20, both The Calm Gallery

Use a combination of prints and embroideries for an interesting mix of pattern

Hastings dark double bed, £329; **Hastings dark bedside table**, £129; **Hastings chest of drawers**, £349; **Kyoto Bird bedding set**, £29.50; **Kyoto decorative plates**, £35; **Kyoto box cushion**, £25; **geometric pompom cushion**, £25; **Kyoto blanket**, £45, all M&S



Tribal designs and geometric patterns feature heavily in this trend

Durrie monochrome patterned floor cushion, £95, Habitat







Clockwise from top left: **Impressive Burned Planks laminate**, £27.99 per sq m, Quick-Step. **Scala Bianco F0710/04 fabric from Traviata collection**, £33 per m, Clarke & Clarke. **Makela Mono Onyx W530/03 wallpaper**, £40 per roll; **Nori V3136/15 fabric from Alberta collection**, £37 per m, both Villa Nova. **Open House matt emulsion**, £24.49 per 2.5l, Dulux. **Lead V3136/03 fabric from Alberta collection**, £37 per m, Villa Nova.

Team black and white with natural, warm wood

Luca walnut round table and four chairs, £499; **Vintage square clock,** £185, both Furniture Village



Give a sofa or bed a new look with a tactile throw

Lambswool check throw, £45, Next



Key things to consider...

- Add soft neutrals to your collection of white. It will soften the look and is a little easier to work with than brilliant white which can look quite clinical if it's not balanced out.
- White walls will bounce light around, so this scheme is suitable even for smaller spaces, and black accents that you choose will add definition to the scheme.
- Mood lighting will make all the difference – choose a mixture of floor and table lamps with a soft, warm glow, rather than simply relying on overhead lighting which can leave your whites looking cold and lacklustre.

A monochrome dining scheme will never date

Monaco long pendant light, £89; **Monaco short pendant light**, £59; **Kyoto pasta bowl**, £6; **Kyoto Blossom tea towel**, £5; **Kyoto bamboo runner**, £19.50; **Conran Aubin display unit**, £799; **Nayoko dining table**, £549; **Nayoko dining chair**, £199, all M&S



Expert tips

'With highly contrasting combinations, you have to get that balance just right or you risk the room looking like a mind altering chessboard from Alice in Wonderland. Try an 80/20 ratio with pure monochrome schemes. In a white room you can introduce black in blocks, such as a painted floor or a piece of furniture, plus artwork and accessories. If it's a black room just flip the colour in the same details but add some really clever layered lighting to breathe life into the room.

For white that stays white and makes everything pop in a contemporary space, choose Dulux Ultra White or Absolute White in a matt finish. If you prefer a more subtle contrast, opt for White Mist or White Cotton. For black, you can't beat velvety flat matt on the walls and a satin finish on the furniture. You can also try Dulux Made by Me blackboard paint on furniture and walls for a more versatile finish that you can have loads of creative fun with.

Monochrome looks great in the living room and bedroom; grown-up spaces in which you want to make an impact. The classic combination never goes out of fashion and if you add small touches of bolder colour and some natural wood, the effect is supremely stylish and deliciously easy to live with.'

Dulux's Creative Director, Marianne Shillingford

Anouk rocking chair, £125, Cox & Cox



Transform an empty space, or a forgotten corner, with this stylish rocking chair

Clockwise from top left: **Arte Marble Carrara laminate**, £31.99 per sq m, Quick-Step. **Thunder Ebony fabric**, £25 per m, Clarke & Clarke. **Britten Nummer fabric**, £3 per m, Ikea. **Accent 111033 wallpaper from Plains & Structures collection**, £65 per roll, Harlequin. **Chiffon White matt emulsion**, £24.49 per 2.5l, Dulux. **Enola 131253 fabric from Spirit Weaves**, £34 per m, Scion.





Use texture and contrasting materials to add depth and interest

Plantation Rug Co Serengeti rug, 120cm x 170cm, £175; **wooden candle stick**, £20; **resin stripe frame**, £22; **striped bulb vase**, £35; **Irina metal frame pendant**, £100; **etched jug vase**, £30; **black etched glass vase**, £30; **monochrome woven throw**, £75; **diagonal grid cushion**, £25; **chevron print cushion**, £25; **chevron diamond print cushion**, £35; **stone matalassé cushion**, £40; **cream herringbone cushion**, £20; **wire bowls**, from £30; **wooden bowl**, £35; **glass trinket box**, £22, all Linea at House of Fraser

Use an 80/20 ratio with large amounts of white and black accents

Ultra White matt emulsion, £24.99 per 2.5l; **Made by Me blackboard paint**, £19.99 per 750ml, both Dulux

Make an impact with an eye-catching, statement rug

Chevron rug, from £32, Littlewoods

Soften your scheme with a palette of greys and muted blacks

Carroll double bed in natural, £600; **Jasper Langham double duvet cover**, £65; **Langham standard pillowcase**, £25 for a pair; **Oxford pillowcase**, £28 for a pair; **Bingham striped runner**, £80; **grey herringbone throw**, £80; **white textured throw**, £80; **Bingham cushion**, £25; **grey lattice cushion**, £25; **silk dot cushion in grape**, £30; **silver A4 photo frame**, £30, all Debenhams

Must-have cushions

Update your sofa with black and white



by Sainsbury's Monochrome cushion, £15, Sainsbury's



Toile linen cushion, £39.50, Alison at Home



Round embroidery cushion, £14, Next



Astell monochrome cushion, £35, Habitat



Pineapple cushion, £8, Tesco

Painting our old furniture gave us a new bedroom

Revamping furniture and adding finds from a local charity shop has changed the look of Debs Cutting's room completely

Moving into their four-bedroom detached Edwardian home in Teddington, Middlesex, six years ago, Debs Cutting and her husband David chose the double bedroom at the back of the property, overlooking the garden. 'We thought it would be quieter at the back, and we wouldn't be bothered by street lights, so we gave the other double room to our daughter, Ally, who is 10.' Their son Ross, 15, was happy with his room and the other was used as a spare, but about a year ago, Debs began to change her mind about the rooms. 'We'd started to outgrow our room and I was really keen to have a proper dressing table. The front bedroom has quite a bit more space as it has a bay window, just the place for a dressing table,' smiles Debs. Promising Ally a makeover of her new room, their daughter agreed to the swap. So last autumn, Ally's room was painted and sorted out, and it was time for Debs to tackle hers.



Before



Total Cost £1,062

A better layout and plenty of painting has given Debs the spacious and restful bedroom she was missing, as well as the opportunity to buy a dressing table and put it in the bay window

STEP ONE Having done lots to the house since moving in, including a large extension at the back, Debs was conscious she'd have to stick to a strict budget, and earmarked £1,200 for the project. 'Our bed was actually okay as was the carpet, and we had two large pine wardrobes we'd bought 15 years ago that were good quality, but dated. But I was confident these could be painted, along with a chest of drawers,' explains Debs. 'The real problems were the fussy curtains, no dressing table and the sickly lilac colour on the walls, which even Ally had grown out of. I wanted something calming and neutral, so we went for a pale grey which made a big difference.'

STEP TWO The layout of the room also needed to be tackled. 'Initially we put the bed in the same position as Ally's had been, which meant that it was in front of you when you opened the door. With the two large wardrobes to take into consideration, it all felt terribly cramped and oppressive, but we realised that if we moved the furniture about a bit we could make it all feel much more open,' she explains.



Replacing the curtains with blinds gives a neat, sleek look at the window and lets in more light, while the newly-painted dressing table fits snugly in the bay, and an old rosewood stool is just the right height for Debs

Painting the major pieces of furniture an off-white also lightened everything up and made them feel less dominant. Debs was thrilled to find an old-fashioned dressing table and two bedside tables in her local charity shop that could be easily transformed. 'The dark wood was soon covered and for the dressing table I used Annie Sloan chalk paint, which is amazing and covers everything so easily,' she smiles.

STEP THREE With the walls done and all the furniture in position, it was time to tackle the window treatment. 'It's always tough with bay windows, but I was fed up with the volume of the curtains and it always looked messy. I wanted blinds so looked into the best way of doing it,' she explains.

Finding a fabric she liked at Tuiss which could be made into blackout blinds to counteract any extra light from the street took a chunk of the couple's budget, but she was happy to pay for the quality. 'It's a much more versatile system as you can have some open and some closed, and it all looks so much neater.' To give the bed a boost, Debs also found a new linen mix headboard in a similar colour. ▷



Painting good quality, but tired, pine furniture an off-white has made it feel much less oppressive, and the funky pink velvet chair adds a welcome burst of colour

Good idea!

With a neutral scheme, it's fun to add a burst of colour, such as this shocking pink velvet chair, which means tones of pink can then be used throughout the room.



Debs has given an instant lift to her old bed by adding a new sophisticated headboard in a linen mix which matches the blinds

Good idea!

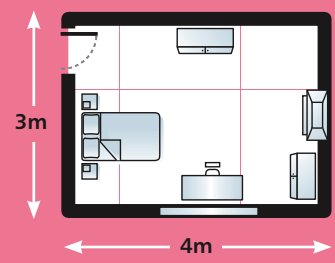
Replace a dated light fitting with a stylish chandelier for an instant hit of glamour. The floral design that Debs chose echoes other flowers in the accessories.



A pretty, floral chandelier offers a timeless appeal to this classic bedroom scheme

STEP FOUR With the basics now in place, Debs was keen to inject some colour to stop the room feeling bland. 'I always go to the Graham and Green warehouse sale, where you get the most amazing bargains. You have to get up at the crack of dawn but it's worth it,' she smiles. 'I knew my shocking pink velvet chair would look great between the alcoves, and I got it for £150 instead of £350. My other bargain was the bedspread covered in flowers and butterflies which I found at the Portobello Road Market. It was at the end of the day and I bartered the guy down to £60. The bedspread allows me to bring in my favourite pastel colours throughout the room and with the pictures up and all my bits and pieces in place I love it in here.' YH

ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Furniture	£231
Paint	£118.90
Blinds	£463.03
Lighting	£120
Headboard	£119
Rug	£10
TOTAL	**£1,061.93**

Shopping list

Walls: Charleston Gray estate emulsion, £38 per 2.5l; **wardrobes, chest of drawers and bedside tables: Skimming Stone estate eggshell**, £53 per 2.5l, both Farrow & Ball. **Dressing table: Original chalk paint**, £18.95 per litre; **soft wax**, £8.95 per 500ml, both Annie Sloan. **Roman blinds in Essential Oatmeal**, from £68.09, Tuiss. **Padded linen mix headboard**, £119, Very. **Pink velvet button chair**, £150 (in sale), Graham and Green. **Metal floral chandelier**, £90, Laura Ashley. **Grey and lace bedding**, £50 for kingsize duvet cover and two pillows, Holly Willoughby at Bhs. **Pink floral bedspread**, £60, Portobello Road Market. **Pip Studio jug**, £8; **bowl**, £9.95, both John Lewis. **Wooden heart picture**, £20; **pink satin jewellery box**, £12, both TK Maxx. **Lamps with heart lamp shade**, £15 each, Wilko. **Dressing table**, £50; **bedside tables**, £7 for two, both a local charity shop. **Knobs** (on bedside table), £6 each, Zara Home. **Spring stag's head print**, £24, Notonthehighstreet. **Picture frame**, £10; **sheepskin rug**, £10, both Ikea. **Heart peg rail**, £12; **cushion**, £7; **blue glass tealights**, £6 each, all Homebase.

Feature Stephanie Smith **Photos** Colin Poole

3 of the best... Upholstered headboards

£240 from John Lewis
The sumptuous Elise headboard in fig could be that little bit of luxury your bedroom is crying out for.

£249.99 from Dunelm
Transform your bed with the Antoinette headboard – in a neutral colourway this piece is extremely versatile and oozes elegance.

£345 from Loaf
We love the beautifully patterned buttons on the Mimosa headboard to add subtle colour and charm.







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Total Cost £1,383

Nicola's bedroom, with its stunning re-instated Victorian fire surround, bright pops of colour and clever mix of vintage, modern and retro styling is now a welcoming haven dedicated to comfort and style

Good idea!

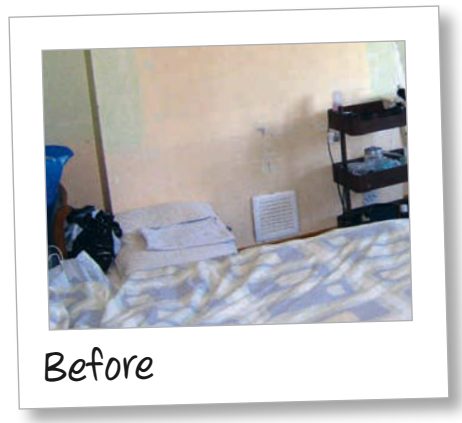
Clever clamp lights do away with the expense and inconvenience of wiring in permanent wall lights, and provide adjustable lighting without requiring a bedside table.

I wanted period styling with a modern twist

A quirky mix of old, new and recycled finds transformed Nicola Jameson's uninspiring bedroom

When Nicola Jameson moved into her three-bedroom cottage in Cheshire it desperately needed modernising. Four years on, and with all the major renovations complete, it was finally time to treat herself to a new-look bedroom. 'Sadly the original Victorian fireplace was long gone and with no obvious focal point I was left with a bland box complete with ugly woodchip wallpaper and grubby carpet,' she recalls. Keen to re-instate some period features, but on a limited budget, Nicola decided to carry out the work herself – marrying a love of vintage and modern styling.

STEP ONE Nicola's first task was to strip the walls and remove the old carpet. Luckily the plaster underneath the woodchip was in remarkably good condition and just required sanding ready for painting. The floor, however, was a different matter. 'Originally I had hoped to sand and varnish the original boards, but it soon became apparent that they were not up to the job, as they were badly stained and marked,' explains Nicola. With no budget for additional flooring, a friend suggested painting the floor, and not only has it proved the perfect solution, but it is surprisingly hard-wearing too. The floor transformation was then completed with two sheepskin rugs, which Nicola cleverly taped together to create a comfy and stylish runner.



Before

STEP TWO Re-instating the fireplace had always been on the cards for Nicola and a weekend trawling her local reclamation yards resulted in the ideal cast-iron surround. 'My original idea was to simply fix it to the wall, but this didn't look very authentic, and the lure to check out the boarded up chimney breast soon proved too tempting,' she laughs. ▷



The addition of a comfy chair is a bedroom must. Paint will always prove to be an affordable and easy way to instantly update or refresh tired furniture – such as Nicola's once ugly gold and black mirror

Good idea!

Try using a bamboo ladder to neatly store belts, scarves and other accessories. Natalie found hers at a local craft village for £13, but they are also available online.

A useful mobile trolley provides plenty of easy-access storage; while practical painted floorboards ensure ease of movement





Good idea!

Nicola's choice of orange and teal accessories add a punch of colour to the room and can easily be changed when she feels like it.

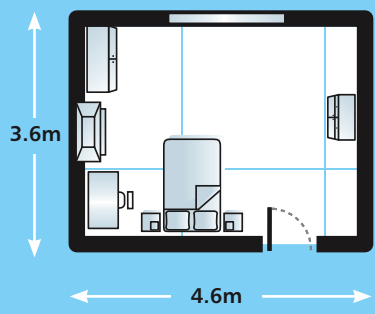
Nicola only needed two rolls of paper to achieve her striking feature wall. She also chose inexpensive unlined linen curtains and a wooden blind, from Ikea, to ensure sufficient funds for a few expensive treats

◁ Opening up the fireplace inevitably proved to be a dirty job, but was easier than Nicola anticipated and, having lined the resulting hole, she used leftover tiles to cover the concrete hearth.

STEP THREE Having restored a much-needed focal point Nicola was then able to turn her attention to the decoration in detail. 'The off-white walls were simply too stark for my taste so being an avid fan of restful greys, I opted to paint two of the walls in a warm charcoal and team them with a brilliant retro feature wallpaper I spotted in a magazine,' she explains. 'I must admit hanging patterned wallpaper was a challenge, and while it may not be absolutely perfect, I am very proud of my first attempt.' To tie in the plainer white walls, Nicola added a picture ledge that also acts as a handy surface for a bedside clock and lamps, which simply clamp in place. While a pair of linen curtains inject warmth at the window.

STEP FOUR In order to stay on budget Nicola decided to keep her current bed and wardrobe, and then looked to the high street for bargain buys, such as the chest of drawers, storage trolley and lighting. This left just enough money for a little extravagance, in the form of an unusual distressed table, bought on impulse at a local store, and the stunning turquoise chair spotted online from Steel Magnolias. However, Nicola's favourite purchase is actually the inexpensive bamboo ladder, which, along with her existing free-standing mirror, she painted to match the scheme. 'I do think using mismatched pieces in this way really helps create a more relaxed, informal style,' she says. And it is a philosophy that has paid off, as the completed room is everything Nicola dreamt of – 'now I just can't wait to relax up there at the end of the day.' YH

ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Fire surround	£200
Furniture	£739
Paint & wallpaper	£231
Rugs	£60
Lighting	£88
Window treatment	£65
TOTAL	**£1,383**

Shopping list

Walls: Grey Teal and Slaked Lime absolute matt emulsion, £37 per 2.5l; **fire surround: Grey Teal intelligent eggshell**, £26 per litre; **Rectory White floor paint**, £59 per 2.5l, all Little Greene. **Lace wallpaper from Melinki collection**, £36 per roll, Scion. **Reclaimed Victorian cast iron fire surround**, £200 (unrestored), Drew Pritchard. **Distressed reclaimed timber table**, £165, And Albert. **Dressing table mirror**, £99, Next. **Liv Olsen chair in turquoise**, £225, Steel Magnolias. **Ranarp wall clamp lights**, £18 each; **Ribba picture ledge**, £7.90; **frames**, from £2.75 each; **Hemnes chest of eight drawers**, £200; **Raskog trolley**, £50; **Fillsta pendant lamp**, £52; **Aina curtains**, £45 per pair; **Lindmon wooden blind**, £20; **Ludde sheepskin rugs**, £30 each; **Gurli cushion cover**, £2; **Spralla scented candles in pots**, £3.50 for two, all Ikea. **Bamboo ladder**, £13, Blakemere Village. **Teal throw**, from £9.99, Dunelm.

Feature Paula Woods **Photos** Lizzie Orme

3 of the best... white statement lamp shades

£16 from The Range
The delicate lace design of this pendant lamp shade will add a feminine touch to your bedroom.

£25 from Ikea
The brilliant copper inside the Nymo shade is ideal for making a modern style statement.

£50 from Habitat
Simple paper folding techniques make the extra large Kura lamp shade a striking centrepiece.



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My bedroom has gone from bland to blissful

Samantha Brown chose a stunning wallpaper in creams and greens to create a serene and calming bedroom



Samantha transformed her old bedroom with stunning bird print wallpaper to make it feel warm and welcoming



Before

When Samantha and Anthony Brown, and their two sons, George, eight, and Oliver, six, moved into their Edwardian three-bedroom house in Woodford Green, Essex, they knew they had taken on quite a project. 'It was a bit of a wreck when we first moved in and we had builders start work almost immediately. The downstairs took priority for years, but upstairs sort of just got left behind.' The time had come for Samantha to revamp their tired bedroom and transform it into a calming retreat where they could relax and get a good night's sleep. Although Samantha was keen to keep to a soft neutral palette, she was a big fan of wallpaper and wanted the room to look cosy and inviting.

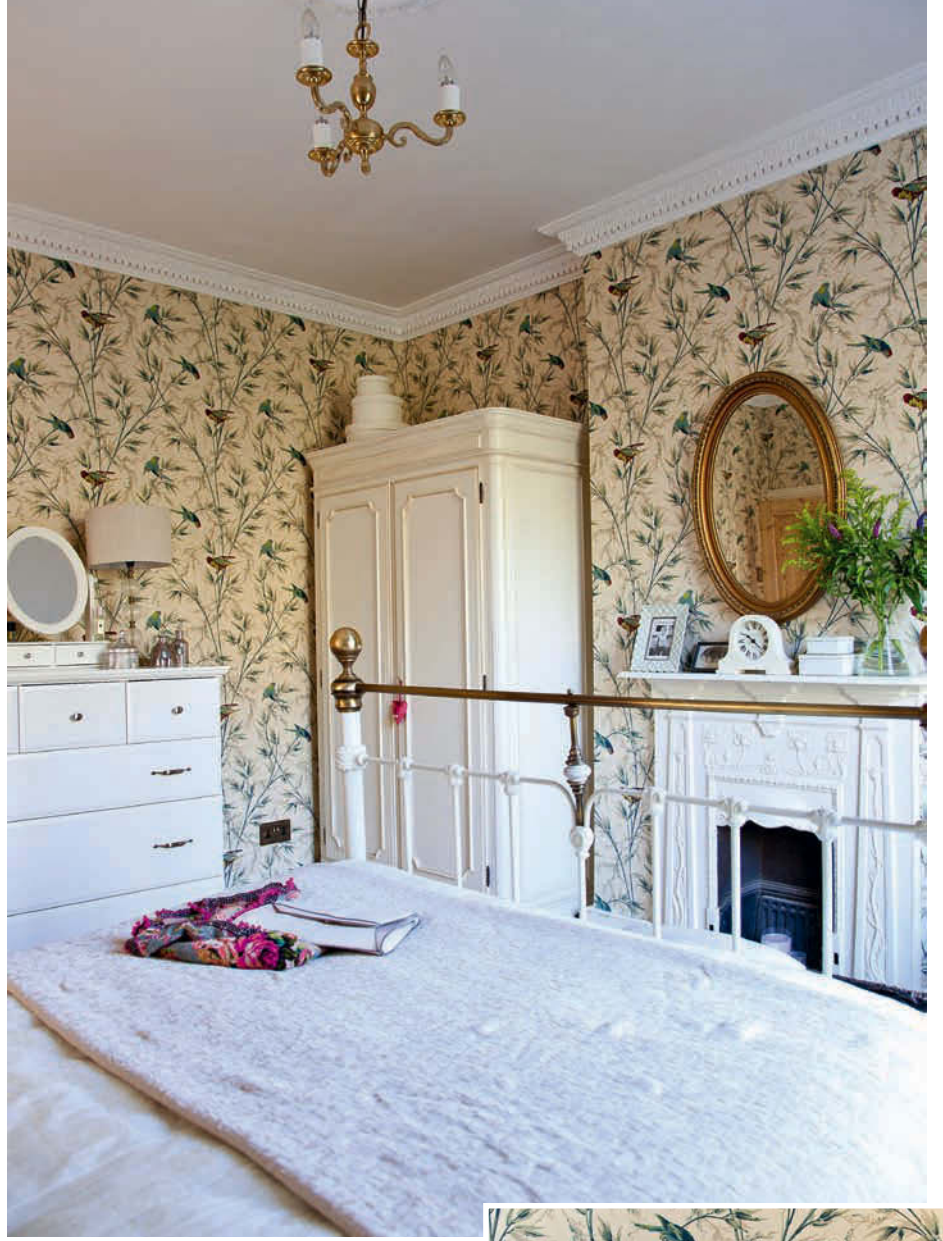
Samantha is a dab hand at sourcing bargains online, she found some great storage solutions for the room

STEP ONE Samantha was keen to be true to the style of the house and wanted as much as possible to create a vintage-style bedroom. 'I love traditional styles but it's also possible to add a modern twist to keep a room up-to-date too,' she explains. There were a lot of built-in cupboards either side of the chimney breast that Samantha wanted to get rid of. 'I much prefer free-standing pieces so we asked the builder to remove all the old fitted cupboards and open up the original chimney breast,' she says. Samantha began searching online for old original fireplaces to make a feature of the chimney breast and found one for just £28 on eBay. 'It was black and quite grubby but we cleaned it up and painted it in a white gloss paint – it fits in perfectly.'

The next job was the floor. Samantha loved the idea of using the existing floorboards and was not put off by the fact that they had been painted in layers of brown paint. 'We hired a sander for the weekend and got to work removing the layers of old paint. It was exhausting but well worth the result,' she smiles. After a few new layers of varnish to seal and protect the wood, the floorboards were given a new lease of life.

STEP TWO Keen to add some 'wow' factor to the room, Samantha got busy looking for some eye-catching wallpaper. 'I wasn't too sure what I was looking for at first, but as soon as I saw this bird print wallpaper I just fell in love with it,' she smiles. Samantha felt it would lend itself well to the vintage feel of the room and decided to go all out and wallpaper all four walls. 'Wallpapering all four walls creates a comforting and enveloping feel,' Samantha explains. 'It's quite a light colour so I knew it wouldn't be too overpowering and there's enough natural light to keep the room feeling light and airy.'

Samantha wanted sumptuous-looking curtains draping all the way to the floor at the window. 'I've made curtains before and I was quite excited to knock another pair up for my bedroom to give the room the look of luxury.' Samantha found some silk fabric in cream in the sale at John Lewis and got to work making them. 'Thankfully the fabric was plain so there was no pattern to match up…which saved me a lot of time,' says Samantha. A new antique brass curtain pole and large golden hold-backs were added to frame the window.





This elegant bedside table is the perfect spot to pop a reading lamp and some pretty accessories

Good idea!

Make use of dead space under the bed with drawers on castors to store all your shoes and handbags.



With quite a shoe collection, Samantha was keen to make use of a good hiding place under the bed



Samantha has made use of the top of a chest of drawers with a pretty lamp, mirror and accessories for added interest



Good idea!

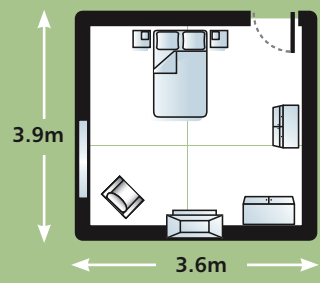
Revamp old glass bottles and jars with wallpaper offcuts and ribbons for an attractive display. Add fresh flowers to fill your room with wonderful floral aromas.

The old cupboards were ripped out to expose a working chimney breast. Samantha found this original Edwardian fireplace, in keeping with the age of the property and painted it white

STEP THREE Furniture was next on the list. Samantha loves to hunt down bargains and also loves selling her unwanted items on auction and local selling sites online. 'While I was on Gumtree, I spotted someone locally selling this gorgeous Victorian bedstead. I contacted the seller and collected it the next day,' she exclaims. Samantha then went to town adding some creamy bed linen and plenty of cushions to give the room a luxurious, but welcoming, look. Samantha also needed bedside tables, a chest of drawers and a wardrobe. Luckily though, one of her favourite shops, Laura Ashley, was having a sale. 'I always gaze in the shop window…and I spotted some pieces that would look just perfect in the room,' she smiles. Sticking to cream painted furniture, Samantha invested in a new wardrobe and bedside tables. A new chest of drawers from Ikea was positioned near the wardrobe with a dressing table mirror on top to create a handy area for Samantha to get ready in the mornings.

'I'm so pleased with the finished result,' says Samantha. 'The wallpaper is so stylish, and it makes the room feel very serene.'

ROOMPLAN



THE DETAILS

Wallpaper	£765
Furniture	£1,795
Curtain pole & fabric	£393.79
Lighting	£27
Rug	£10
TOTAL	**£2,990.79**

Shopping list

Great Ormond Street wallpaper in Parchment, £76.50 per roll, Little Greene. **Maison Henry Bertrand Silk Douppion fabric**, £20.95 per m (in the sale), John Lewis. **Ashton curtain pole in antique brass**, £34.99; **canvas lace cushion**, £15.99; **gold sequin cushion**, £12.49; **painted pheasant cushion**, £7.99; **chenille throw**, £17.99; **Seraphina cushion**, £16.99, all Dunelm. **Bed bought on Gumtree**, £120; for similar try **Lilly metal bedstead**, £229.99, Dunelm. **Northern Nights Chantilly Stripe duvet set**, £81 for a six-piece set, QVC. **Provencale ivory side table**, £227.50; **Provencale ivory wardrobe**, £1,155; **gold painted wood holdback**, £17.50, (all in the sale) all Laura Ashley. **Birkeland chest of drawers**, £200; **Holmsel chair**, £40; **Barometer work lamp**, £27; **Tejn faux sheepskin rug**, £10; **Vardo storage box**, £25; **Byholma chest**, £65, all Ikea. **Embroidered moth cushion**, £25; **Meadow print cushion**, £25, both M&S. **Mantel clock**, £40, Newgate. **Heart of House Colette dressing table mirror**, £34.99; **Heart of House Madeleine mercury candle holder**, £9.99, both Argos.

Feature Emma Fishman **Photos** Lizzie Orme

3 of the best... bird-inspired wallpapers

£35 from Next
We love the striking bird design of the Bird Menagerie wallpaper which has a hand-painted quality to it.

£39 from Laura Ashley
This elegant design is ideal in a bedroom where you want to create a more relaxing scheme.

£44 from Wallpaperdirect
The more simple design of the Swallows wallpaper, by Sanderson, will subtly introduce the bird theme to your home.



S side table walnut
~~£129~~ **£64**





oval coffee table white
~~£299~~ **£149**



loop leg chair cream
~~£99~~ **£49**



ripple rocker aubergine
~~£199~~ **£99**



retro circles chair brown
~~£99~~ **£49**



pisa sofa bed red
~~£399~~ **£249**

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STYLIST'S secrets

You don't need to spend a fortune hiring an interior designer to get a professional look in your home – just follow these simple design rules…

Choose the right size rug

A small rug will instantly shrink a room so go as large as you can afford. Make sure tables and chairs are either included within the area of the rug, or outside of it – try not to let furniture hang half on, half off. When choosing a rug for under the dining table make sure it's at least 90cm larger than the table. When you sit down to eat, the chairs should still sit completely on the rug.

Harper loveseat in Aristo Print green, £899; **Harper footstool in Woodland Fern black**, £279; **Jolie armchair in Woodland Fern black**, £549; **Harper sofa in Conte velvet moss**, £1,299; **small faceted vase**, £12; **Pretty clear teapot**, £15; **Pretty clear cup and saucer**, £9.50; **honeycomb vase**, £15; **knitted pouffe**, £89; **bumblebee cushion**, £12; **thistle mirror cushion**, £15; **etched moth cushion**, £19.50; **Sputnik wall clock**, £59; **botanical cake tins**, £12.50 for set of two; **orb pendant light**, £129; **Conran Dusk wide vase**, £35; **jute natural rug**, £129, all M&S

Feature Laura Higgins





Create a sense of flow

Create a gentle flow throughout your home, connecting each room by using similar colours, or the same flooring.

Upholstery Stanton headboard in Eloise pale camomile, £425; **Charlston two-drawer side table**, £275; **Pale Charcoal paint**, £32 per 2.5l; **Poppy Meadow Primrose bed linen**, from £20; **Forbury Stripe dove grey bed linen**, from £22; **Lucie white bed linen**, from £18; **Savoy dove grey quilt**, £150; **12" white drum shade**, £36; **Carson nickel lamp base**, £120; **Croyde camomile cushion**, £36; **petal glass bowl**, £35, all Laura Ashley

ADOPT THE 70-20-10 RULE

For a balanced scheme a good rule-of-thumb is to use the main colour for 70% of the scheme, say the floor and the walls, 20% in a second colour, this could be the fabrics, and the last 10% for accessories, in an accent colour.

Padstow fixed cover two-seater sofa in Edwin topaz, £1,400; **Glenmore chairs in Ludlow topaz**, £700 each; **curtains in front room: Palm Leaf apple**, £48 per m; **curtains in back room: Eaton Stripe apple/topaz**, £32 per m; **made-to-order drum shade in Bacall apple**, from £40; **Noah floor lamp base**, £150; **Patricia white large floor mirror**, £500; **Nigella apple bolster cushion**, £40 each; **Croyde apple cushion**, £36; **Orchid apple embroidered cushion**, £48; **Nigella duck egg and apple cushion**, £40; **Dylan apple throw**, £50; **Bexley duck egg rug**, from £100; **water hyacinth lidded baskets**, £70 for two, all Laura Ashley





Add an element of surprise with a focal point

Create a focal point that catches the eye as soon as you walk into a room and anchors your scheme.

Papilio 111079 wallpaper, £56 per roll; **fabrics on chairs**: **Folia Velvets: tangerine 130405**, **claret 130401**, **lagoon 130381**, **magenta 130398**, **lime 130374**, each £54 per m, all Amazilia collection, Harlequin



Consider lighting carefully

Position table and floor lamps near to seating areas, with the shade at around eye level, which casts the best kind of light in living areas and bedrooms. When hanging pendants above a dining table, 90cm above the table is a good height.

Textured Geo wallpaper, £15 per roll; **Stanton small sideboard**, £225; **Marina glass table lamp**, £45; **Conway chair in Tweedy weave teal**, £399; **green Alma side table**, £60, all Next

STICK TO ONE BOLD PATTERN

For a simply co-ordinated scheme choose one bold pattern, either on a wallpaper or fabric, then pick out the colours and accessorise in similar shades.

Phoebe 98081 wallpaper by Albany, £11.99 per roll, Wallpaperdirect.com

GROUP SIMILAR ITEMS TOGETHER

Display collections rather than hide them away. Three items are more pleasing to the eye than a pair so choose odd numbers.

Naples blue vase, £22; **Sera saffron round vase**, £15; **Naples red large vase**, £28; **Santiago blue pitcher**, £25; **Ellon vase**, £30; **Carine green vase**, £8; **Aggie large pomegranate vase**, £28; **Usagi small vase**, £25; **Kavita bottle vase**, £22; **Carine red vase**, £8; **Garda grey vase**, £10; **Alton low AV unit**, £180, all Habitat





Hang statement wallpaper sparingly

Consider statement wallpaper as a treat which should be enjoyed in small doses. It will make more of an impact used on small areas of wall, in alcoves, or on panels, than if used all over, which could overwhelm a room.

Cedar 111083 wallpaper from Levande collection, £38 per roll, Scion





ENHANCE NATURAL LIGHT WITH PALE COLOURS

Use light colours to help bounce light around a room for an airy feel.

Croft oak office chair, £399; **Croft oak office desk**, £699; **Croft cloche with marble base**, £35; **Croft Barrett task lamp in putty**, £95; **Croft wood basket with leather handles**, £50; **Croft braided rug in ivory**, 120cm x 180cm, £190; **Croft Grasses wallpaper**, £22 per roll, all John Lewis



Get the right pattern combination

Mix large and medium scale patterns, or medium and small scale patterns – but steer clear of combining large and small patterns in the same room.

Zanzibar collection fabrics in aqua, from £22 per m, all Clarke & Clarke



MAKE A ROOM FEEL MORE SPACIOUS

Cramming a room with furniture will make the space feel cramped. Keep a minimum of 40cm between sofas and coffee tables, and 60cm between dining chairs and the wall so that they can easily be pulled out from the table. Scaled-down furniture will make a room appear smaller. It seems counter intuitive but in a small room choose the same size furniture as usual, or even a couple of large-scale pieces.

Cushions: selection from Amazilia collection; curtains: Nalina 120332, £46 per m; **upholstery: Amazilia Velvets 131507**, £88 per m; **Raya 111038 wallpaper**, £42 per roll, all Amazilia collection, Harlequin



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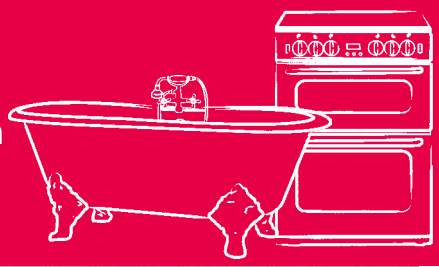
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Kitchens &BATHROOMS

Update your kitchen with a new worktop



Trend: Mediterranean retreat

Escape to the beach without having to leave the bathtub with this trend that's inspired by the idyllic white buildings and bright blue sea of the Mediterranean. It's a great trend if you love the combination of white and blue but are tired of the ever-popular nautical look. Swap anchors and deckchair stripes for intricate tiles and ombré prints and use accessories made from natural materials, such as recycled glass tumblers and linen storage baskets, to add to the beachy feel. There's plenty of opportunity to put your painting and upcycling skills to good use too by turning crates into storage or breathing new life into old wooden furniture with a coat of white paint.



Santorini baskets, £20 for two; **microfibre tile bath mat**, £11.99; **pure cotton towels**, from £3.99, all Bhs



Dinner is served

You can always count on Habitat to turn everyday objects into show-stopping style icons and its newest range of cookware is no exception. Available in grey and saffron yellow, the enamel dishes are perfect for hearty stews, or use them for healthy bakes to enjoy alfresco as the weather gets warmer. Because they look so great, you can take them straight from the oven to the table without having to transfer your food into prettier dishes, saving you the extra washing up too.



Malone large grey casserole, £55; **Malone large yellow oval baker**, £30, both Habitat



Fresh as a daisy

Brighten up your kitchen this month with the new range of serveware from Gisela Graham that's got us going dotty for daisies. The range features ceramic storage pots, a glass jug with matching tumblers, as well as an adorable teapot and handy food cover. With prices starting from just £4.99 for the milk jug, you can afford to kit out your kitchen in time for those sunny summer breakfasts.

Sugar pot with spoon, from £5.99; **jug**, from £4.99; **storage pot**, from £7.99; **teapot**, from £9.99, all Gisela Graham

Feature Laura McLeish

A new way to shower



Shower specialist Methven has launched a revolutionary halo-shaped showerhead that's sure to make your morning routine heavenly. The Aio Aurajet's specially designed nozzle creates fan-shaped sheets of water so you'll get double the water coverage on your skin compared to a traditional shower. It's also an eco-friendly choice as it uses as little as nine litres of water per minute, so you needn't feel guilty about indulging in a little 'me' time.

Aio Aurajet™ shower handset, £89, Methven

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We couldn't wait to rip out

When Rachel and Gareth Prowse moved house the dated kitchen was the first thing to



Insider info

WHO LIVES HERE?

Rachel Prowse, 40, a full-time mum, lives with husband Gareth, 38, a global regulatory affairs manager, and their children Jude, five, and Kit, two. They moved into the three-bedroom Victorian terraced house in Whitley Bay a year ago.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE ROOM?

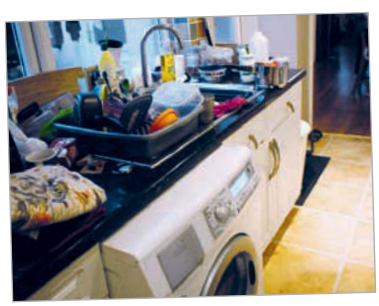
'It feels very spacious and light now. Considering it's a small kitchen we spend a lot of time in here chatting, and with the ceiling being so high it doesn't feel like a small galley kitchen at all.'

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS?

'Be realistic about what you can afford as it's easy to let your heart rule your head. Get a good tradesman who you trust and will pass on some of their trade discount.'

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE OLD ROOM?

There was hardly any worktop or storage space, the boiler was exposed and there was no space for a washing machine. The oven also fell apart as it wasn't screwed in properly.



Before

KEEP UNITS SIMPLE IN A GALLEY KITCHEN

Shaker-style units gave Rachel the relaxed country look she wanted, and are in keeping with the age of the house. She wanted a change from the modern high gloss units in her previous home, so chose a matt pale grey as it's versatile and easy to brighten up with accessories.



Altering the kitchen was top of the list when Rachel and Gareth Prowse bought their Victorian terraced home. 'We'd been living in a new-build house in Newcastle but had always wanted a bigger older home,' says Rachel. 'The coastal lifestyle really appealed – we'd lived in Plymouth together as students so we were drawn to the lovely community in Whitley Bay.'

After viewing two or three houses, the Prowses found their dream home on a pedestrianised street. 'As soon as we came through the door we knew this was the one, even though it had awful carpets and dark paint colours everywhere,' says Rachel. However the kitchen really let it down. 'After coming through the reception rooms, the ceiling felt really low and Gareth is 6ft 3" tall,' says Rachel. 'There wasn't much space and the white MDF units with fake black marble worktop and 90s terracotta tiles looked really dated.' Not wanting to make an offer until they knew they could make changes, the pair took along joiner David Bell of Bell Joinery to their second viewing. 'He suggested creating a vaulted ceiling and blocking up the side door,' says Rachel. 'There's another door from the hallway into the back yard so it wasn't needed.' Just days after they moved in, Rachel had plans drawn up for a new kitchen with David project managing the building work, tiling, plumbing and plastering.

'He suggested Howdens as the carcasses are all good quality, but when the original price was double our budget we had to re-think,' admits Rachel. 'I always wanted a Belfast sink and solid oak worktops so I didn't want to compromise on that, but we saved money by choosing different door fronts, not going for soft-close drawers and sourcing appliances online.'

After two-and-a-half weeks of building work – during which time Rachel took the children to her parents in Yorkshire – the family had a whole new kitchen. 'It was an awkward space and we were limited in where we could put things,' says Rachel. 'But I'm really pleased with how spacious it feels now. As well as new plumbing for a washing machine, we've even managed to fit in a slimline dishwasher too.'

Feature Karen Wilson **Photos** Katie Lee

the old kitchen

go in the skip



LAY NON-SLIP FLOORING

Rachel chose shipdeck flooring – a wood laminate with a rubber line running through it. Since the bathroom is off the kitchen, its anti-slip properties make it a practical solution. Joiner David Bell laid the flooring width-wise between the units to make the room appear wider.

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY SPACE

As the wall next to the fridge freezer had to be kept free for opening the doors, Rachel has opted for a high shelf that displays purely decorative accessories such as her Jubilee plate from Popolo Ceramico. A picture and clock from TK Maxx make sure this area doesn't look too bare.





RE-USE OFFCUTS

After the solid oak worktops were fitted, Rachel's husband made the offcuts into chunky rustic shelving. It's the ideal place for her collection of Cornishware picked up at Tynemouth Market and colourful Emma Bridgewater crockery.

PICK TIMELESS TILES

Instead of standard white Metro tiles, Rachel has opted for a rustic version with an uneven crackle glaze finish which is perfect for the shabby chic style. The dark grey grouting ties in with other hints of black in the room, such as the kettle, scales and rubber lines in the flooring.

CHOOSE A STARTING POINT

A Belfast sink and solid oak worktop were at the top of Rachel's wish list, so the rest of the scheme flowed from there. She's followed the retro country look through with a Bush Radio, mini school milk bottles for flowers and a vintage tin advertising sign.



SHOPPING LIST

Greenwich grey units, £69.60 per 600mm base unit; **stainless steel curved handles**, £5.16 each; **Lamona Rhone swan neck mono bloc tap**, £78.24; **Lamona Belfast sink**, £185.76; **solid oak worktop**, £701.76 per 3m length, all Howdens (prices quoted are sale prices). **Hotpoint slimline dishwasher**, £229; **Beko single oven**, £179; **Hotpoint cooker hood**, £75; **Beko electric hob**, £239; **Beko fridge freezer**, £299, all Appliances Online. **Quick-step Lagune Shipdeck flooring in natural varnished oak**, £23.75 per sq m, Floors Online. **Rustic Metro white gloss tiles**, £29.95 per sq m, Walls & Floors. **Dulux Chiffon White matt emulsion**, £17.92 per 2.5l, B&Q. **Made-to-measure blind**, £125, Blinds 2 Go. **Nigella print**, £17 (unframed), Mai & Moo Creative. **House Rules print**, £29 (unframed), Little A Designs. **Cadbury's vintage wooden sign**, £15, Vintage Von. **Bush retro DAB radio**, £69.99, Argos. **Kitchen sign**, £12, Y&L. **Speech bubble chalk board**, £6.25, Sass & Belle. **Red geranium polka dot tea towel**, £6.95; **Goosie Goosie oven glove**, £14.50; **school milk bottles crate**, £12.95 for six, all Orchard & Berry. **Egg basket**, £9.95; **Polly's Pantry chicken side plates**, £8 each; **cake stand**, £24, all John Lewis. **Julie Dodsworth Fairytale Crush mugs**, £6 each; **Mason Cash red mixing bowl**, £17; **Emma Bridgewater grapefruit bottle**, £29.95, all Fenwick. **Alex Clark lovebirds rolling pin**, £15.99, Lakeland. **At Home with Ashley Thomas storage tins**, £18 for three, Debenhams.

TOTAL COST: £4,453.17



B&Q's IT classic white kitchen is shown here with a stunning white worktop, making for a light, bright scheme that will stand the test of time

White cashmere textured-effect laminate worktop, £104 per 3m length, B&Q

Feature Lisa Hibberd

Smarten up your kitchen with a new worksurface



If you love the look of wood, check out Ikea's fantastic range. The Hammarp design is solid wood, while the Karlby worktop designs have a 3.5mm top layer of solid wood over particleboard

Hammarp oak, from £100 per 186cm length; **Karlby birch**, from £60 per 186cm length; **Karlby walnut**, from £110 for a 246cm length, all Ikea

We've gathered together some of the best buys around to help give your kitchen a quick and easy update

Although we often think of cabinets as the main component of a kitchen, the worksurface is also an important element of this hardworking space. If yours is looking a little worse for wear, why not consider replacing it to breathe new life into your kitchen? There are hundreds of different materials and designs available to suit both your budget and taste, so measure up, do your research and give your kitchen a brand new look.



Exotic Iroko wood is a great choice for worktops, as it has a naturally high oil content

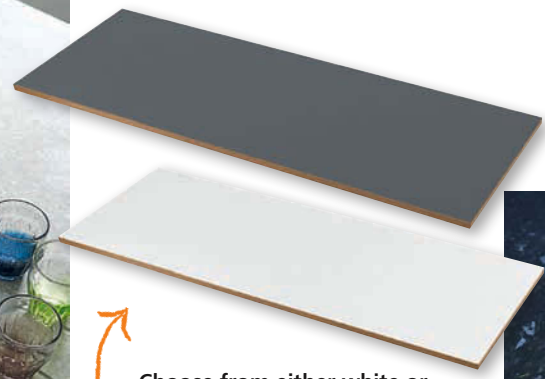
Iroko solid wood worktop, from £130 per 2m length, www.worktopexpress.co.uk

KITCHEN IDEAS



Bushboard's solid surface worktops can be fitted with an integral sink for a sleek, high-end look

Encore solid surface worktop in Mountain Haze, from £158 per linear metre, Bushboard



Choose from either white or dark grey with this affordable double-sided design which comes complete with two wood-effect edging strips

Bergstena double-sided laminate worktop, from £50 for a 186cm length, Ikea

Create a striking contrast by teaming a black surface with white cabinets

Black quartz laminate worktop, from £78 per 3m length, B&Q





This useful bracket will allow you to mount an extra section of worktop to create additional surface space

Capita bracket, £10, Ikea



Mistral 25mm solid surface worktop in Consera, from £250 per linear metre, Karonia

If you a have a bit more to spend, consider this solid surface solution which gives the effect of natural quartz. It's tough, hygienic and completely non-porous, and it can be cut, shaped and joined easily, without the need for specialist tools. It's also easy to mix materials and thicknesses to create a designer-style kitchen



Team wooden cabinets with a black worktop for a smart, sophisticated look

Laminate Ebony granite gloss laminate worktop, £84 per 3m length, B&Q

Bold geometric tiles revived

Lara and Jonathon Devitt were inspired by their love of mid-century modern and



Insider info

WHO LIVES HERE?

Lara Devitt, 33, a creative media relationship manager for Arts Council England, lives here with her husband Jonathon, 31, a project administrator at Northumbria University. They've lived in their four-bedroom split-level mid-century house in Donwell Village, Washington, since July 2014.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THE ROOM?

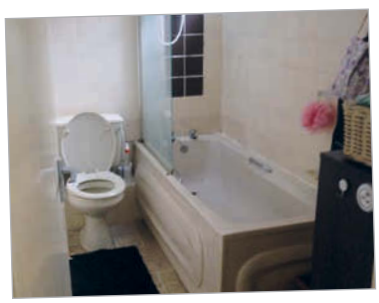
'The bath as it's so deep. I don't have baths that often but when I do it's quite special with loads of candles, a glass of wine and a film on the iPad.'

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS?

'Go for two main features – for us it was the flooring and the shelving – then keep everything else really simple. I'd also suggest tiling everything as it's much easier to clean.'

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THE OLD ROOM?

The old bathroom was well loved and not to Lara and Jonathon's taste. The shower wasn't very powerful and the taps were at one end which was not practical.



Before



MAKE USE OF YOUR SPACE

The high window made it tricky to fit a curtain rail, so as Lara's not a fan of glass shower screens she opted for a circular ring instead. The new bath works so much better with the taps in the middle too.

Feature Karen Wilson **Photos** Katie Lee

our bland beige bathroom

Swedish design to revamp their small bathroom on a budget



Lara Devitt just loves the 60s and 70s, so when she discovered a three-storey townhouse built in 1969 with lots of original features, she fell in love with it on the spot. It was a groundbreaking design by architect Eric Watson, who used to live on the street and built the nearby Galleries shopping centre – but the bathroom felt more Eighties. 'Since we live on a hill, the layout is upside down with three of the bedrooms and the bathroom downstairs to give the living room the best views,' says Lara. 'We loved the split-level layout but the bathroom was very beige and it didn't fit with the mid-century modern style of the rest of the house. We wanted to be as authentic as possible to the period. If the bathroom had been avocado or peacock blue we probably would've kept it!'

With limited space, changing the layout wasn't an option, but the pair managed to completely change the look of the room for under £4,000 including fitting and accessories. 'We wanted it to look very simple, a little industrial and retro but without it being a pastiche,' says Lara. 'When I spotted the floor tiles online, they reminded me of 60s and 70s flooring so they were the starting point for the whole room.'

The other must-have for Lara was an iconic String shelf. 'I've wanted one of these for a long time,' she says. 'I just love their simple Swedish mid-century design. I deliberated for ages about whether to get the wooden one or the white one.' With two eye-catching features in the room, Lara wanted to keep the suite very simple and found the perfect square design in B&Q. 'They were brilliant and did all the plastering, fitting and tiling in five days,' says Lara. 'We're really pleased with our new bathroom and can't wait to get started on the kitchen next.'

MAKE IT INDIVIDUAL

Being mad about vintage Scandinavian design, Lara has developed a passion for Swedish Dalahast horses which she hunts out on eBay and at car boot sales. They're dotted around the rest of her home, as well as the bathroom, to create continuity.

UPGRADE YOUR SHOWER

As Lara's home has a ducted air central heating system and therefore no combi boiler, she was advised to fit an electric rather than a mains-fed shower. She opted for a 10.8kw model to gain as much power as possible.



PICK A STARTING POINT

The bold geometric floor tiles were the starting point for the whole scheme and add a funky retro feel to the bathroom. Lara has picked towels in a single colour to avoid overkill.



BE CLEVER WITH COLOURS

If you've chosen bold floor tiles, opt for simple wall tiles and vice versa. Lara's gone for grey grouting and grey gloss for the skirting boards as it matches the elements of grey in the floor tiles.

BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL

Keeping the basin and tiles very simple is the way to go when you want your vibrant accessories to be the star of the show. Bright yellow and teal blue is a classic combination that suits the retro look.



CHOOSE FEATURE SHELVING

Lara chose a white String shelf with duck egg blue on the walls behind, which creates a great backdrop for her vibrant teal, red and yellow accessories. Many of her favourite pieces were found in vintage and charity shops, including the original 70s teak mirror.

SHOPPING LIST

Cooke & Lewis Fabian close-coupled WC with soft close seat, £150; **Fabian full pedestal basin**, £80; for a similar bath try **Cooke & Lewis Shaftsbury standard acrylic rectangular bath**, £108; **Mira Sport Max electric shower**, £278; **Underground white ceramic wall tiles**, £18 per sq m; **Kudox flat ladder towel warmer chrome**, £45, all B&Q. **Vives 1900 Guell-1 porcelain floor tiles**, £22 per sq m, Whitebridge Tiles. **Home of Colour Dove Grey gloss paint**, £11.99 per 750ml; **Kitchen & Bathroom duck egg matt emulsion**, £18.99 per 2.5l, both Homebase. **Circular shower rail**, £23.99, Argos. For a similar shower curtain, try **plain blue shower curtain**, £5, Tesco. **String pocket shelving**, £109, Utility Design. **Frajen blue bath towels**, £5.50 each, Ikea. **SuperLiving curve candle holder in dark petrol**, £21, One Brown Cow. **Coloured pressed glasses**, from £7, RE. **John Rocha red vase**, £15, Debenhams. **Tulip tumbler**, £10; **Tulip soap pump**, £16; **Tulip lidded container**, £15, all John Lewis.

TOTAL COST: £1,361.97

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Perk up sweet potatoes with our tasty recipes



Be inspired by great ideas for family bathrooms

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Choose the best surfaces *for your bathroom*

Ensure that your bathroom is practical as well as stylish by choosing some of the latest ideas for walls and floors

As a room which is used morning and evening by the whole family, it's essential that your bathroom is a space that can handle its fair share of daily wear and tear. There are plenty of hard-wearing solutions available – for example, if you're fed up with scrubbing grubby grout, consider an alternative such as acrylic or glass panels, which look smart and have no grout lines to clean. Look out for floor tiles with a non-slip rating of R9 or R10, which means that they are recommended for use in domestic bathrooms. And don't forget the walls – always choose a specialist bathroom paint which will resist moisture and prevent mould and mildew forming. Read on for some of our favourite ideas…



Made from a vinyl fabric which is resistant to moisture and mildew, these simple roller blinds are the perfect window dressing for a stylish bathroom

Toro Bisque roller blind, from £69 for a 61cm x 61cm size, The Fabric Box



Create a sleek and practical showering space with Bushboard's laminate wall panels, which come in 28 designs so you're sure to find one to suit your bathroom scheme

Nuance wall panels, from £60 per sq m, Bushboard



Acrylic panels are a great alternative to tiles, providing a high gloss, easy-to-clean surface which can be used for splashbacks and even shower walls. The panels come in three sizes and a choice of nine colours, and are straightforward to fit with no fiddly grouting required

Lustrolite® bathroom panels, from £283 for a 207cm x 100cm panel, Abacus Direct

Feature Lisa Hibberd



Made from durable acrylic and resin stone, this shower tray is covered in Mira's exclusive non-slip coating to help avoid any nasty accidents

Flight Safe shower tray, £248.40, Mira Showers

For the look of tiles without the hassle, consider water-resistant panels, which are available in a range of colours

Aqualock wall and ceiling panels in Galet Grey, from £65 for a pack containing eight 120cm x 25cm panels, Frontline Bathrooms





These stunning wood-effect tiles are made from porcelain and have an anti-slip rating of R10, making them ideal for use in the bathroom

Tabula tiles in Cappuccino, £39.98 per sq m, Topps Tiles



This affordable shower tray is made from acrylic and stone resin – the top layer has antibacterial properties to help protect against any bacteria, stains and odours

MStone shower tray, from £117.68, Merlyn Showering

Keep your bathroom surfaces sparkling with this handy squeegee, which has a folding handle for easy storage and a suction cup for hanging

Foldaway squeegee, £19.99, Simplehuman



Get a helping hand with the latest SMALL APPLIANCES

Make your kitchen work harder by investing in some of these great gadgets to save time and effort

Feature Lisa Hibberd

With many of us leading busy lives, spending too much time in the kitchen after a busy day is often the last thing you want. If you feel in need of an extra pair of hands, there are so many useful small appliances on the market that you'll be spoilt for choice. From health-conscious grills to multi-cookers and mixers, take your pick for hassle-free preparation and cooking.



Kenwood Chef Sense, from £449.99, John Lewis

▲The next generation of the Kenwood Chef, the Chef Sense, has been refined to offer both stylish design and high performance. The 4.6-litre bowl is capable of mixing up to 2.7kg of cake ingredients, 680g of pastry or 1.3kg of dough, and the new intelligent control gradually increases from soft start to full speed, giving you total control and less mess. The all-new Twist Fit system allows for simple connection of attachments, and there's an adaptor included in the pack which means that old attachments can also be used. We love the fold tool that's available to buy as an extra, which ensures soufflé and meringue perfection.

▼With five cooking functions; contact grill, panini press, full grill, full griddle and half grill/ half griddle, this versatile gadget would be a great addition to any kitchen. The plates are easy to remove and dishwasher-safe, while the fat collector enables you to cook more healthily.



De'Longhi CGH902 5-in1 grill and griddle, £119.99, John Lewis



▲Go for a retro look with Swan's 800W microwave, which features three power levels, a defrost setting and a smart digital display.

Vintage SM22030 800W digital microwave, around £139.99, Swan



Tefal OptiGrill, £94.99, John Lewis

▲Ideal for cooking meat to perfection, this grill automatically measures the thickness of meat and adjusts the cooking time to suit. Its clever technology can also detect how many items are on the grill and adapt the settings accordingly. The colour-changing display reveals how steaks or chops are cooking – if the light is yellow, the steak is still rare, as it moves to orange it's medium, and when it turns to red it's well-done. It also features six automatic programmes with dedicated settings including sausages, burgers, bacon and fish.



Jet Chef JT469 combination microwave oven, from around £350, Whirlpool

◀Whirlpool's new combi oven features various cooking options including microwave, steam, grill and defrost, making it a flexible choice for any busy kitchen. The Chef Menu function boasts 30 automatic, stored recipes to help you make hassle-free meals. 6th Sense technology ensures time and energy savings, while 3D microwave distribution means that each and every part of your dish is cooked perfectly.



◀ Enjoy fresh, crusty loaves whenever you fancy with this bread maker, which does all the hard work of mixing, kneading and proving for you. It features 12 options including a gluten-free programme, and it can even make cakes and jam.

Salter bread maker, £49.99, Robert Dyas



◀ If you struggle to start the day without a steaming cup of coffee, this wifi bean-to-cup machine could be right up your street. Controlled via a free iOS or Android app, you can set it to switch on from the comfort of your bed, and it will even ask if you fancy a coffee when you walk through the door, using its 'welcome home' mode. It can also be synchronised with other devices such as fitness trackers, and if it detects that you've had a bad night's sleep, will suggest a stronger coffee the following morning to give you a much-needed boost.

Smarter wifi coffee machine, from around £129.99, available from Firebox, John Lewis, Currys and Amazon

▶ You can't beat a raclette griddle for sociable cooking and dining. The removable stone grill on Swan's design lets you cook food on the top as well as in the eight raclette pans included.

'Come Dine With Me' electric stone griddle raclette, £39.95, Swan





▲ At the touch of a button this pressure cooker determines the quantity of food, if it's fresh or frozen, and the correct steam and temperature to cook it at. It cooks using pressurised steam, which helps to lock in flavour and moisture, while also accelerating cooking times and saving energy. Its clever features include a range of one-touch options, a delay timer and a keep-warm mode.

Pressure Pro, £99.99, Thane



▶ This no-nonsense stick blender has a variable speed 750W motor, powerful enough to blend soups and purées in minutes. The variable speed can be controlled by the illuminated top dial, and the attachment is dishwasher-safe for easy cleaning.

SEA33 stick blender, around £45, Stellar



Help to increase your fruit and vegetable intake with this affordable blender, which comes complete with two sports bottles, ready for you to take with you on the move. All parts are dishwasher-safe for easy cleaning

Sport 2Go blender, £29.99, Kenwood



◀ If you're short on time but still want to cook a great range of healthy meals, this multi-cooker is a good buy. It has 50 pre-programmed recipes – all you need to do is follow the instructions on the easy-to-read LCD display, which will guide you through, step-by-step. Cook4me will then select the correct cooking temperature and time. The start time can be set up to 15 hours in advance, and the ceramic-coated bowl is easy to clean.

Tefal Cook4me multi-cooker, £249.99, Lakeland



◀ The latest version of the classic Teasmade produces steaming hot water in around five seconds, ready for your morning cuppa. The newly-designed heating element offers up to an 80% energy saving. There's a one-cup option as well as a continuous pour setting, ideal if you're making a whole pot.

Teasmade Now, £89.99, Swan

WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

WIN! A smart security package from Yale

worth £2,000!



Get out and about this summer, safe in the knowledge that your home is protected by Yale smart security



The next few months will see bank holidays, summer breaks and, hopefully, warmer weather, meaning it's the best time to get out of the house and enjoy the great outdoors. Unfortunately, many of us overlook the fact that we leave our homes unattended much more frequently during the summer months, and this can create opportunities for burglars.

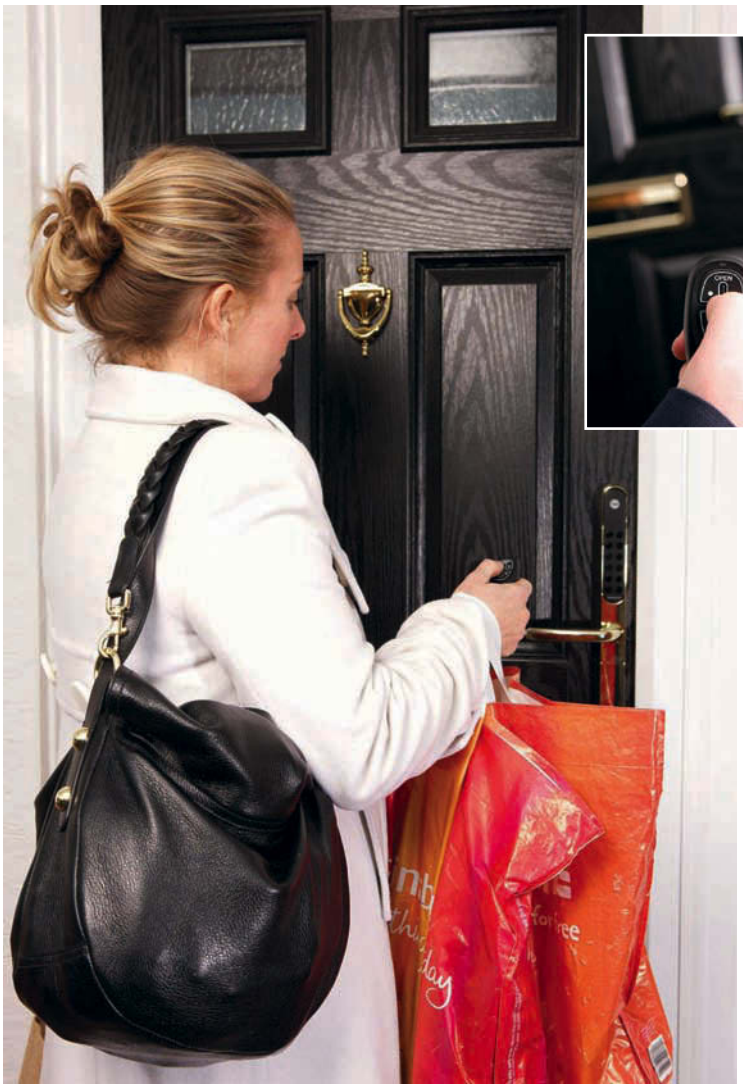
For this exclusive giveaway, Yale is offering two lucky *Your Home* readers the chance to win a smart security prize package, worth up to £2,000. Each prize package includes a smart door lock, a SmartPhone home alarm, and a high-resolution CCTV kit, including professional installation by Yale Security Point – a network of fully trained and approved security installers.

The security experts at Yale have the expertise to protect you, your home and your possessions. They have been manufacturing traditional security solutions, such as British Standard locks, safes and padlocks for decades, but in recent years they've introduced 'smart' security products to combine security with technology.

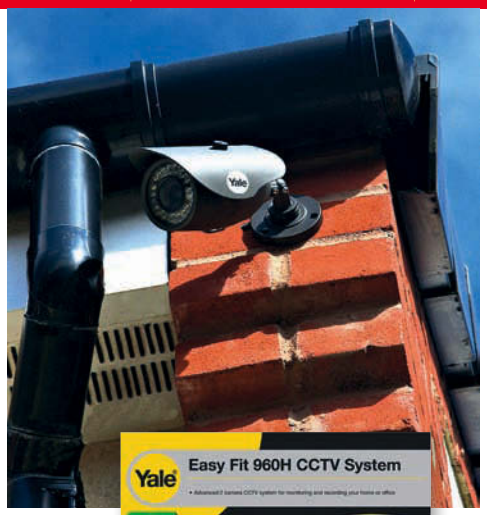
We are all used to unlocking our cars with a remote key fob, and now you can do the same with your front door.



WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!



Yale's Keyfree and Keyless locks are so easy to use and will make sure your valuables are as safe as possible. Just use the remote key fob or enter your pin code to gain access to your home





The Keyless door locks use a personalised pin code to keep your house safe and give you peace of mind that potential intruders won't be able to pick the lock



The Keyfree and Keyless door locks from Yale unlock when you enter your own personalised pin code into the built-in keypad to gain access to your home. Plus, if you opt for the brand new 'smart' Keyfree Connected, you can insert a module into the body of the lock to allow it to communicate with your Yale alarm and CCTV system, as well as other home accessories, using the accompanying smart phone app.

Yale's Easy Fit CCTV range allows you to keep a watchful eye on your home and its contents while you're away. The weather-resistant CCTV cameras record in colour during the daylight and built-in infrared LEDs provide night vision of up to 20 metres. The systems record in high-quality resolution onto a pre-installed hard drive and can be linked up to a TV or monitor. You can also connect the DVR to your router, meaning you're able to check on your home from wherever you are with the free Yale CCTV app.

Forming part of Yale's Easy Fit range, the SmartPhone Alarm takes home security to the next level. Using the app, the alarm can be activated, deactivated, monitored or programmed at the touch of a button. For added peace of mind, your smartphone can also receive a notification message and images captured on the wall-mounted motion sensor to show the cause of the trigger, seconds after the alarm sounds.

For more information visit www.yale.co.uk or search for 'Yale UK' on Facebook and Twitter

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For your chance to win, simply answer the following question:

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**Texts cost 50p, calls cost 26ppm* and last approx. 2 mins.

Closing date: 31st May 2015 and three working days later for online entries.

Terms and conditions:
1. Winner must be a home owner. 2. Installation by Yale Security Point is not available in Scotland or Northern Ireland but Yale will organise alternative installation for these areas.

RULES OF COMPETITION ENTRY
*Calls cost 26p per minute and last approx. 2 minutes. Calls from mobiles may vary. **Texts cost 50p plus your standard network charge. This is not a subscription service. Lines close at midnight on 31st May 2015 and three working days later for online entries. The winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received after the closing date. If you call to enter after the advertised closing date you will not be entered into the competition, but you may still be charged. 1. Hubert Burda Media UK may use your details to let you know about other products and services we think may be of interest to you. If you do not want offers from us, please end your text message with BURDA NO. 2. The competition is open to anyone in the UK over the age of 18, apart from employees of Hubert Burda Media UK, Spoke and any other companies or company employees involved in the competition. 3. Unless otherwise stated prizes include delivery to the UK mainland but not installation or removal of existing appliances or products. 4. No cash alternative is available and products will not be changed or upgraded, but should the prize become unavailable Your Home has the right to offer an alternative prize. 5. Only one online entry per giveaway per person. 6. Winners must be willing to participate in publicity if required. 7. Proof of postage is not proof of receipt. 8. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 9. Unless otherwise stated prizes must be claimed within six months. 10. Holidays and breaks are subject to availability at the time of booking and unless otherwise stated do not include travel, insurance or extras. 11. Reproduction of this competition in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Hubert Burda Media UK reserves the right to prosecute any offending parties. 12. Allow 8 -10 weeks from selection for completion. 13. Entrants are asked to provide their full name and address when entering the competition. SP: Spoke – 0333 202 3390.

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Make it easy!



We're all about the colour this month – from a brightly-hued butterfly cushion to a Decopatched table and striped laundry basket. Plus don't miss our guide to laying your own gravel garden path – and our advice on home maintenance solutions.



Create a textured butterfly cushion



Jazz up a plain table with fun printed papers



Refresh your laundry with fab ideas



Build your own gravel garden path



We answer your maintenance and DIY questions with expert advice

Make, do & craft

Freshen up with these useful laundry ideas

Rope-covered washing basket

Decorate a plain plastic basket to brighten up your chores

SHOPPING LIST

- three 1m pieces of jersey fabric, in pink, green and white
- scissors
- safety pin
- plastic laundry basket, £3.99, Argos
- hot glue gun
- 1m white cotton fabric

1 Cut each of the 1m pieces of jersey fabric into 5cm wide strips. We cut ours along the length, so each strip was 150cm long. Group the strips together in threes (keeping the different colours separate) and knot each group at one end. Use a safety pin to secure the knot to a chair or sofa, then plait together. Once you reach the end of the strips knot again to secure. Repeat until they are all plaited.

2 Turn the plastic basket upside down. Starting at the base, begin to glue your plaited jersey strips onto the outside of it, wrapping them around and hot-gluing every few centimetres to ensure a firm hold. Butt the strips snugly up against each other as you go and stretch them slightly taut to achieve a neat, uniform finish. Stop adding strips around 3cm from the rim of the basket.

3 Turn the basket right-side-up and place a 1m square of white cotton fabric inside it. Tuck the fabric over and around the rim of the basket, and trim any excess away, to create a lining. Glue it into place around the rim, then finally add the last few plaited strips, covering the raw edges of the fabric as you go.



Hung Out To Dry storage jar with 24 pegs, £8.50, Garden Trading. **Lacko chair**, £17, Ikea







Top tip

Jersey fabric is available in several different widths – pick one that is at least 147cm wide, but larger if available, to make longer strips.

Feature and styling Sophie Holt **Photos** Lizzie Orme



Peeling Planks wallpaper, £47 per roll, Wallpaper Direct

Owl peg bag

Keep your pegs together with this cute fabric tote

SHOPPING LIST

● one fat quarter Sienna cotton in Persimmon by Alexander Henry, £3.25, Fancy Moon ● one fat quarter Asian Circles cotton in Green by Kaffe Fassett for Rowan, £3.25, Fancy Moon ● pencil ● scissors ● 3m pink bias tape ● iron ● pins ● sewing machine ● thread ● small scrap of cream felt ● two large buttons ● needle and thread







1 Download and print the May Owl templates from www.yourhomemagazine.co.uk or send a stamped SAE to Your Home May Owl Templates, Your Home, HBM UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, CO4 9HU. Use the templates to cut the upper and lower front pieces from pink cotton, and the back and wing pieces from green cotton. Cut two 30cm pieces of pink bias tape and press each in half lengthways. Fold these over the long straight edges of the upper and lower front pieces to encase the raw edges. Pin and machine stitch into position. Repeat to stitch a length of bias tape around the edge of each wing piece.

2 Lay the back piece down flat, with right-side facing down. Lay the upper and lower front pieces on top of it in position, with right-sides facing up. The two straight edges of the upper and lower fronts should align in the middle of the shape. Lay the two wing pieces on top, as pictured. Pin into position. Cut a long length of bias tape and press in half lengthways, then pin around the outer edge of the work, encasing the back, upper and lower front and wing pieces together. Machine stitch all around.

3 Fold the pointed top of the owl down, to create the beak. Hold into position with a few small hand stitches. Cut and stitch a small triangle of cream felt onto the owl's face to create a beak, then stitch two buttons to create eyes. Finally cut two 30cm lengths of bias tape to use as ties. Press each in half lengthways and top stitch to secure, then hand stitch to the top of the owl.

Top tip

To make your owl stronger, use a fusible or stitched interfacing underneath the fabric to stiffen it.

Laundry detergent

Make your own low-cost laundry powder with this quick recipe

SHOPPING LIST

● one 125g bar of soap ● grater ● paper plate ● glass jar ● Borax substitute, £1.90 per 500g bag, Homecare Essentials ● Soda Crystals, £1.25 per 1kg bag, Homecare Essentials ● kitchen scales ● spoon or scoop ● brown card gift tag ● pen ● scissors ● Truly Scrumptious doilies, £4 per pack of 24, Hampton Blue ● PVA glue ● paint brush ● washi tape ● string or thread

1 Begin by grating the soap. Use the finest grater you can – the more powdery the finished product, the better. We chose to use a soap suitable for sensitive skin, and grated it onto a paper plate. Once the entire bar has been grated, use the plate to pour the soap shavings into a glass jar.

2 Weigh out two parts Borax substitute and two parts Soda Crystals for every one part grated soap – as our soap bar weighed 125g, we weighed out 250g of both the Borax and the soda. Scoop the different powders into the jar with the soap and mix well – your detergent is now complete.

3 Make a label. To do this, lay a brown paper gift tag onto the edge of a paper doily, and draw around it. Cut out the shape and use PVA glue to stick the cut-out onto the label. Leave to dry, then edge with strips of washi tape. Write onto the label and tie around the neck of the jar.

Top tip

Mix a few drops of natural essential oil into your detergent to add a gentle scent.







Wooden sugar spoon, £4, Garden Trading.
Floral pegs, £4 for 10, Hampton Blue



Furniture facelift

Create a colourful side table with clever storage solutions

A useful little table with added storage would be a handy addition to any home, so this month we set out to create one ourselves. Vintage finds aren't always easy to source and ideas can be tricky to replicate from one recycled item to another, so we started by taking a look at the high street. We found a small, reasonably priced table and teamed it with wooden file boxes, both available from Ikea. We covered the table with Decopatch paper, which added a great splash of colour and pattern. Attaching the boxes was simple and all in all the transformation was quick, easy and a lot of fun!

You will need

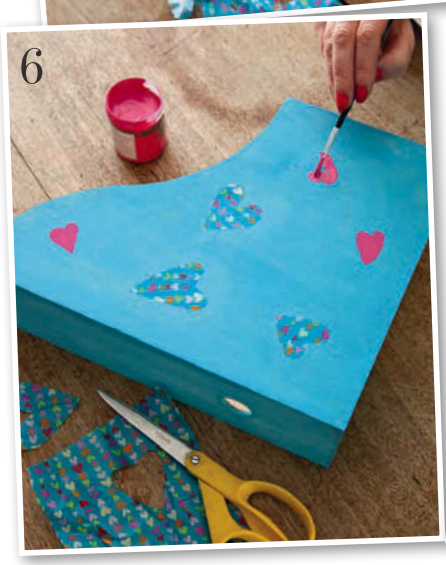
✓Lindved table, £15, Ikea ✓Folk Heart Chains Decopatch papers, £3.79 per pack, Hobbycraft ✓paint brush ✓Paperpatch glue varnish, £8 per 300g, Hobbycraft ✓blue water-based paint ✓plate or shallow bowl ✓water ✓sponge ✓two sets of Knuff magazine files, £6.75 per pair, Ikea ✓scissors ✓pink water-based paint

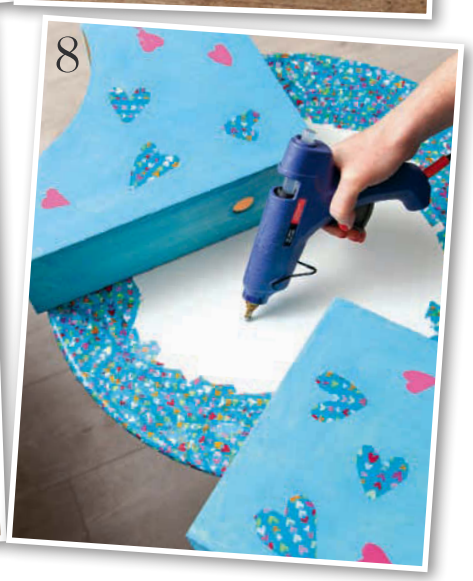


Before









1 Begin by building the Lindved table following the instructions given. Next, tear the Decopatch sheets into small pieces; you will need quite a lot in order to cover your table.

2 Paste the surface of the table with a coating of Paperpatch glue varnish, working on one small area at a time. Lay a few torn pieces of Decopatch paper on top of the glue and smooth them flat with a brush – the pieces can be moved around a little if they need repositioning. Cover the entire table in paper, including the legs, the top and the small middle shelf.

3 Over-paint the paper with the glue varnish as you go, this will seal the paper in place and protect it from knocks and general wear and tear. Leave to dry completely.

4 Mix a small amount of water-based paint and water together – approximately equal amounts of each, and stir. Use a sponge to wipe the diluted paint across the Knuff magazine files. Add more paint if you need to ensure an even coverage of colour. The paint mixture should dry quite quickly.

5 Cut several hearts from the leftover Decopatch sheets and glue them on to the painted surface of the magazine files.

6 Next, paint several hearts on top of each box. Painting the hearts freehand is fine – they don't have to be regular sizes or exact. We opted for a bright pink paint to make them really stand out.

7 When the boxes and table are completely dry, arrange the box files on top of the table. Spend a little time arranging them – we placed ours so that they created a small square hole in the middle of the tabletop, perfect for storing pencils and stationery.

8 When you are happy with this arrangement, glue each box in place one at a time, using a hot glue gun.

Feature and styling Jo Rigg **Photos** Lizzie Orme



Top tip

We used Decopatch paper for our table but you could use scraps of gift wrap. Decopatch paper is very lightweight, perfect for craft projects, and best of all it comes in a great selection of colours and patterns.

Sew simple

Create this colourful textured cushion to add a tropical look to your home

This gorgeous butterfly pillow is created using several different techniques. Beading, appliqué and embroidery combine to make a multi-textured, eye-catching design.

You will need

cushion blank · measuring tape · pen · scissors · 1m Grand Cayman Banana Tree cotton by Marjolein Bastin, £13 per m, Fancy Moon · one fat quarter Flutter Fly cotton by Michael Miller, £3.25, Fancy Moon · fusible webbing · iron · black felt · one fat quarter Asian Circles Green cotton by Kaffe Fassett for Rowan, £3.25, Fancy Moon · sewing machine · thread · mixed selection of seed beads and bugle beads · 50cm string of sequins · hot glue gun (optional) · black embroidery thread · embroidery needle

1 Measure your cushion blank. Add 3cm to both the height and width and cut a piece of Banana Tree cotton to that size – this will be your front piece. For the back, add 3cm to the width and 15cm to the height. Cut a piece out to this size, then cut it in half widthways – these are your two back pieces.

2 Using a warm iron, fuse a sheet of fusible webbing to the back of your Flutter Fly cotton. Once secure, cut out a selection of butterflies from the fabric, leaving a 3mm border around the edge of each. Peel the paper backing from the webbing and place the butterflies onto a sheet of black felt. Using a cool setting, iron the two to fix them together. Cut out around each butterfly, leaving a 4mm border.



3 Download the May Butterfly template from www.yourhomemagazine.co.uk or send a stamped SAE to Your Home May Butterfly Template. HBM UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex, CO4 9HU. Use it to cut one butterfly from the Asian Circles cotton, then back with black felt as in step 2.

4 Once the large butterfly is backed with felt, hand stitch a selection of beads over the design. We followed the floral print of the fabric as our guide – stitching small seed beads and bugle beads in a variety of colours until we were happy with the results.







5 Lay your cushion front out flat with right side facing up. Place your butterflies onto the fabric and move them around until you're happy with their positions. Pin each into place, then sew each smaller butterfly into place by running a single line of straight machine stitch up the centre of each body. Leave the wings free to create a flapping, 3D effect.

6 Machine top stitch all around the edge of the large central butterfly, making sure to keep within the black felt border to hide the stitches as best as possible. When finished remove all pins and press the cushion front on a cool iron setting.

7 Add the final decorations to the design. We added a line of sequins to the body of the large butterfly – these can either be stitched by hand or glued. Hand stitch two antennas onto the top of the head using black embroidery thread and a backstitch.

8 Press and machine stitch a 1cm double fold hem along one long edge of each of the two back pieces. Lay the cushion front out flat with right sides facing upwards, then place the two back pieces on top with right sides facing down, and the two hemmed edges towards the centre of the cushion – they should overlap slightly. Pin, then stitch all around the edge of the cushion leaving a 1.5cm seam allowance. Turn right sides out, press, then fill with your cushion blank.

Feature Sophie Holt **Photos** Lizzie Orme



Top tip

This design is perfect for customisation – add extra sequins, embroidery or beads to suit your tastes.

Blossom bedside table, £229; **Nadia double bedding set**, £35; **Agnes cluster light**, £120, all Bhs. **Laura Oakes cushions**, £30 each; **Laura Oakes candle**, £16; **Laura Oakes trinket tray**, £10, all Debenhams

Girls' Guide to DIY

Do more than get from A to B with our guide to laying a stylish gravel path



A garden path is a practical addition to any garden and can double as a low-maintenance design feature to make the most of your outdoor space. Follow our simple guide to laying a gravel path to get your garden summer ready

Feature Laura McLeish **Step-by-step images** B&Q's You Can Do It manual **Main image** Garden Trading

Toolbox treat

It's important to ensure the foundation for the path is solid and level so that it not only looks great, but can be used for years to come. The best tool for this job is an earth rammer or tamper. You can buy or hire a petrol-powered vibrating plate compactor, but for smaller jobs such as this, you can achieve the same result with a tamper for a fraction of the price.

Roughneck tamper 10" x 10", £37.99, Screwfix

Preparing the foundation

Before you can start to lay the path, you'll need to prepare the sub-base – a layer of compacted broken bricks and stones, known as hardcore, that will provide the foundation for the path. Mark out the outline of the path using builder's lines attached to wooden pegs. Remove the top soil by cutting the turf in strips with a spade and roll it up. Next, dig the area to 100mm deep and use marker pegs to mark the height that the finished hardcore should reach. Tip in enough hardcore to come just above the top of the marker pegs and compact it using an earth rammer. Cover the surface with a thin coat of sharp sand or all-in ballast and rake it level.

Next, mark out your concrete footings for the kerb using builder's lines attached to wooden pegs. These footings need to be a width of about 75mm from each side of the kerb and dug to a minimum depth of 75mm. Hammer in marker pegs at 1m intervals down the length of the dug out footings so that the pegs stand 75mm above the excavated ground.



1 Pour a concrete and aggregate mix into the trench until it is level with the tops of the marker pegs. Leave it to set for 48 hours.



2 Using a trowel, apply a bed of mortar on top of the concrete footings for the edging kerb to sit on. Use a builder's line to align the edging as you set it down on the mortar.



3 Build up the mortar on both sides of the edging kerb using a trowel, to secure the edging in place. Make sure you keep the mortar lower than the path level, and ground level on the outside edge, so that you won't see the mortar once the path is finished.



4 Make sure the hardcore sub-base is firmly compacted. Cover the base with a mixture of coarse gravel and sand, to a depth of 50mm. Level it out using a garden rake.



5 Use a garden roller to compact the coarse gravel and sand. If you don't own a garden roller or don't want to buy one especially for the job, you can hire one from companies such a HSS Hire and Jewsons.



6 Cover the surface with fine pea gravel to a depth of 18mm-25mm and roll it again using the garden roller.

ASK THE EXPERTS

We answer some of your DIY and maintenance questions, with a little help from the experts

Q I've moved into a property which has lovely bay windows, and I'd like to dress them with curtains. What's the easiest option when it comes to poles?
Diana, Kendal



A ***Rebecca Talbot, Trade Marketing Executive at Swish, has this advice...***

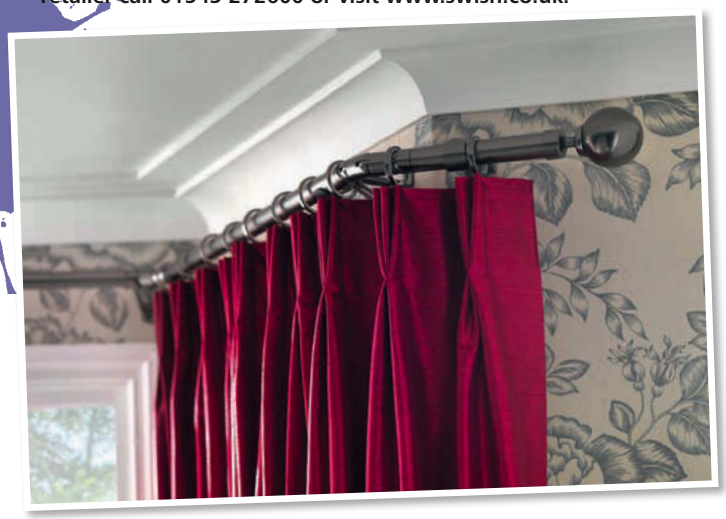
Swish offers two metal bay pole solutions; one from its Elements range and another in its mix and match Design Studio range.

The Elements 400cm Belgravia Bay Pole has a 28mm diameter and sleek ball finials. It is ideal for a two-corner bay as it has an elbow joint that can be angled up to 90 degrees to suit your window shape. The pole can be cut down to size to make sure it fits neatly too.

For larger bays or if you'd like to create a return, Swish's Design Studio Bay Pole has a unique joining piece to allow you to create a bespoke solution. This 'snake' style joint can be angled to suit your window and locked into place. You can then do the same to return the pole out from the recess. As this range is bought in components you simply choose from a 300cm or 500cm bay pole kit in either 28mm or 35mm diameter, and finish it with your choice of 12 stylish finials.

Both ranges have passing brackets and passing rings. Design Studio rings are lined to make them easy to glide right around the bay, but you'll need to avoid eyelet curtains as these won't pass the brackets. Both ranges are available in four colourways so you can really get the look you want.

Prices start from £149.99 for the Elements range and from £115 for the Design Studio models. For further information or to find a retailer call 01543 272600 or visit www.swish.co.uk.



Q We have recently introduced a second cat to our household, and he is always stealing the other cat's food. Is there a product which could help to stop this problem?
Mollie Patterson, South Wales





A ***Nick Hill, Founder and Managing Director of SureFlap, has this suggestion...***

With this in mind, SureFlap® has launched the innovative new SureFeed® Microchip Pet Feeder. The first product in its range of ground-breaking new pet feeders, it is activated when an authorised pet is identified by its existing microchip or RFID collar tag. The SureFeed's lid slides open automatically when approached by the animal and closes once the pet has finished feeding.

The Microchip Pet Feeder bowl features a unique integrated seal that helps to keep food fresher for longer. It stops cats from eating each other's food, making it ideal for pets on special diets. The bowl and mats are easily removed for cleaning and the whole unit can be quickly wiped clean.

SureFeed microchip pet feeder, £99, SureFlap

Q I've heard about infrared heating and think it could be a good option for my bathroom. How does it work and what are the benefits?
Daisy Barrett, by email





A ***Peter Ferguson, Managing Director of Infrarad, offers this advice...***

When the sun comes out you instantly feel its heat and warmth. The sun's rays are heating you, along with the solid objects around you, and then radiating back and raising the air temperature – this is infrared heating.

With infrared radiators, the objects in your home, as well as the walls and ceilings, are working in the same way, storing the heat and releasing it evenly into the room. Unlike with convection heaters, the heat from an infrared radiator does not need air to circulate but permeates it, creating a comfortable environment.

When it comes to saving money, infrared radiators use much less energy than some alternatives. In fact, you'll need about half the energy to heat a room compared with a standard electric panel heater.

A fully qualified and competent independent heating installer will be able to confirm the best infrared product to heat your home. Infrarad's Designer range comes in black or white, and has a sleek design which would suit any contemporary scheme.

Prices for the Designer range start from around £360. For more information call 01525 851122 or visit www.infrarad-heating.com.

Q I'd like to install a security alarm in my parents' home, what are the options?
Mr Barton, Dumfries



A ***David Herbert from security specialist Yale has this advice...***

It's a really good idea to install a home alarm – The Metropolitan Police Office says that studies have shown a well-fitted and maintained burglar alarm system makes you less likely to become a victim of burglary.

Yale's Easy Fit range of burglar alarms have been specially designed to be the easiest alarms to install and offer improved security features. The first alarm in the range, the Yale Easy Fit standard alarm, costs £210 and includes everything you need to secure a flat, terrace or semi-detached home, including a siren box, two PIR sensors, two door contacts and a keypad.

The second alarm is the Easy Fit telecommunicating alarm, which retails for £320. This has all the benefits of the standard system, but also comes with a partial touch-screen control panel, for ease of use. The telecommunicating system also offers ultimate peace of mind by ringing you when the alarm is triggered and can also be activated and deactivated using a touch-tone telephone.

The last alarm in the range – the Yale Easy Fit smartphone alarm – costs £550 and takes home security to the next level. Using the accompanying free app the alarm can be activated, deactivated, monitored or programmed at the touch of a button. For added peace of mind, seconds after the alarm sounds your smartphone can receive a notification, an email, and even images captured on the wall-mounted PIR device to show the cause of the trigger (iOS only).

All the alarms in the Easy Fit range work on the 868MHz wireless frequency, which is more tightly controlled than many used by typical DIY alarms; this results in a clearer channel with less interference. Plus, all the components of each alarm are wireless, so they can be installed as a quick and simple DIY job, with minimal fuss and mess. Professional fitting from a Yale Security Point installer will cost around £150.

For more information and to view the full range of products available visit the website at www.yale.co.uk.



Q I'd like to build a bespoke storage unit to utilise the wasted space under my stairs. What's the best material to use?
E Potter, Welwyn Garden City



A ***Derek Spears from ContiBoard has this suggestion...***

The area under the stairs is often wasted, so creating storage or an office desk in this space is the perfect solution and isn't difficult. First think about what you need, is it space for books and CDs or a place to have a desk and a computer, or even both?

In most cases you'll be able to combine a variety of storage and work space options and the best way to start is by drawing up a rough plan of what you'd like and noting the height, width and depth of the units you want to create. To make maximum use of the space, these shelves can be designed as a number of separate units that step down in height to follow the angle of the stairs.

The next stage is to choose your materials. ContiBoard is ideal for building storage, shelving and built-in furniture and is perfect for both beginners and competent DIYers. This high-quality board comes in a variety of shades – including Liquorice, Toffee, Nut Crunch and Vanilla Ice – and is available in a variety of lengths and widths to cater for different projects.

The boards can be joined using dowels with PVA adhesive, chipboard screws or internal corner blocks from DIY outlets. For any sawn edges, use ContiBoard edging tape for a professional finish.

For further information call 01769 575400 or visit www.conti.co.uk.



ASK THE EXPERTS

If you have a DIY or maintenance question, write to Ask the Experts, Your Home, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, Essex CO4 9HU or email **asktheexperts@yhmag.co.uk**

Feature Lisa Hibberd

Your May checklist

Discover seasonal tasks for your home and garden

IF YOU DO ONE THING THIS MONTH...

The evenings are getting lighter, the weather is getting warmer and finally it's time to organise your garden, ready for entertaining friends and family. Get your outdoor furniture and accessories back to looking their best with our helpful hints.



- First things first, your furniture will need a good clean after having been stored away all winter. Metal and wooden furniture will just need a wipe down with a damp cloth and a solution of warm water and mild detergent. Once you've cleaned every surface, leave the furniture out in the sun to dry completely. If you have rattan furniture, use the brush attachment on your vacuum cleaner to clean up any loose dirt or dust that might be lurking. For any really stubborn dirt, use a clean, dry toothbrush or paint brush to dislodge grime first before vacuuming.
- Now check your furniture for anything that might need repairing. If you have painted metal furniture and notice any chips, it's important to sort them out as soon as you can to stop rust from spreading to the rest of the chair or table. Get rid of any loose paint or rust with sandpaper or a wire brush before applying a primer. Once dry, apply a specialist metal paint or spray paint to match the existing colour and leave to dry completely before use. Make sure you do this in a well-ventilated area, preferably outside, and use dust sheets or newspaper to cover the surrounding lawn or paving.
- Cushions can transform your outdoor furniture, but they might need freshening up if they've become stained or faded. Before washing them, check the manufacturer's label on the covers to work out whether they can be machine-washed on a cool cycle or if any stains should just be tackled by hand, using a mild stain remover. Even if the cushion covers are removable, some might lose their shape or colour in the washing machine so it's always best to stick to the manufacturer's advice. If they're still looking a bit lack lustre, or you'd like to try out a new colour scheme, you could dye the covers using a machine-use fabric dye – again, just be sure to follow the instructions to avoid patchy results or colour bleeding.



Essential buy for May

If you're planning on throwing any garden parties to make the most of the warm weather this summer, make sure you're the host with the most with these adorable decorations from Talking Tables. The Truly Scrumptious range features pretty vintage florals and our favourite piece is the lampshade garland with real fabric fringing that'll make your gathering feel extra special.

Truly Scrumptious lampshade garland, £8.50, Talking Tables

A neat idea

There's nothing better than perking up a salad or soup with some home-grown herbs, but for the novice gardeners amongst us, growing them is easier said than done. This clever herb pot has a cute, flower water-level indicator that sinks from sight when your plant needs watering, so you'll never over or under water it and can look forward to fresh herbs all year round.



Smart fresh herbs pot, £20, Cuckooland







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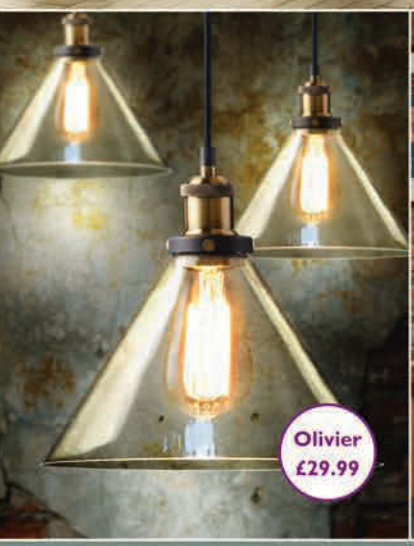
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Reader homes

Turn the page to take inspiration from our four gorgeous reader homes



92

Liz Waldron turned her weekend cottage into a family home

Show off your hard work in *Your Home*

Have you just finished decorating your home? If so we'd love to see your photos and, who knows, your home may be featured in a future issue. Please send photos to Laura Higgins, Your Home, Hubert Burda Media UK, The Tower, Phoenix Square, Colchester, CO4 9HU



74 **Francesca Goodrich-Barton decorated her home on a tiny budget**



88 **Alexis Painter made the most of her apartment's unusual shape**



80 **Karen Simpkins chose a modern country interior**

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Francesca's favourite space is the living room, where the couple relax once the kids go to bed. The old cream sofa has been covered with a crochet blanket Francesca's grandmother made when Oscar was born

My home's style is all about being inventive

With a tiny budget to decorate her family home, Francesca Goodrich-Barton has used creative flair to transform this house into a cosy family home



As a young family setting up home in Bristol, Francesca and her husband, Jimmy, couldn't afford to buy in the area they wanted. 'We'd fallen in love with the St. Werburghs area of Bristol,' says Francesca. 'But it is totally out of our budget. It's a green oasis close to the city centre with a bohemian mix of artists and young families. There is a sense of community there.' So rather than compromise on the location, the family decided to rent their ideal home instead.



One day, as Francesca was walking home from the school drop, she gazed through the window of a house she was admiring and was greeted by a friendly smile and invited inside by the homeowners, Sheila and Colin. The couple had inherited the property and had started to renovate so that they could rent it out. It couldn't have been more perfect for Francesca and Jimmy. 'Sheila showed me round this dark house which was full of cobwebs and drab décor but every room had a pretty fireplace, picture rails, and downstairs the original glass-fronted cupboards were intact,' recalls Francesca. Past the jungle of weeds and overgrown scrub in the garden was an Anderson shelter dating back to the Bristol blitz. 'As you can imagine, I was sold on the place,' says Francesca.

The house itself was like a dusty museum full to the brim with forgotten furnishings. 'Before we could move in properly, the house renovation needed completing and slowly the charm and character of the place was revealed,' says Francesca. ▷

Good idea!

When space is at a premium find clever storage solutions such as a writing bureau that doubles up as a home office, and a place to store art supplies.

The twins adore their mini kitchen that was a Christmas gift from Francesca's parents. The walls are painted in Swedish Blue from Craig & Rose



The family love to snoop around vintage markets where they pick up furniture which can be repurposed. This mirror is from Portobello Road Market in London, and they found the weathered garden ornament outside a neighbour's house. Their rescue cat, Crumbs, loves to perch on the piano. The piano would have been designed for a ship as it is small but has the same sound as a usual piano – perfect for this home that is tight on space



COME ON IN...



THE HOME
A three-bedroom 19th-century terrace house in St. Werburghs, Bristol, built c.1930.

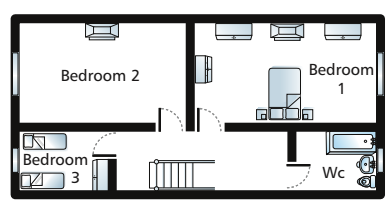
WHO LIVES HERE?
Francesca Goodrich-Barton, 29, an illustrator and furniture upcycler, www.francescabarton.co.uk, her husband Jimmy Goodrich, 40, a guitar teacher, and their four children, Oscar, 11, Martha, nine, and three-year-old twins Arthur and Orlando, as well as Crumbs, the cat.

ANY BARGAIN FINDS?
'To save on delivery costs when shopping for vintage finds, try Gumtree which will give you a local search of bargains in your neighbourhood. And, to create a feeling of space in a small house it's usually best to keep the walls pale and add colour with fabric, ornaments and foliage.'

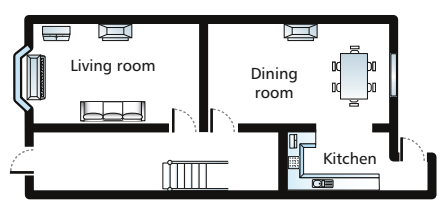
WHAT'S NEXT?
'A vintage cot for the new baby is on my immediate list, and to hang more shelving in our kitchen-diner to combat the constant clutter battle.'

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?
'Spending next to nothing on making a comfortable home that's enjoyable for a large family to live in.'

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE?
'Calm and Scandinavian-inspired with whimsical touches with a sprinkling of British eclecticism.'



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

For stockists see page 120

Feature and Styling Kate McPhee **Photos** Bridget Peirson



This cupboard of curiosities shows off Francesca's gift for composition and love for nature-inspired displays

'As an illustrator, I find inspiration everywhere: nature, old buildings, interesting junk shop finds, other artists' work.'

As they knew the landlords they had some influence on the style of the house before moving in. 'They had planned to carpet throughout,' says Francesca. 'But I intervened and asked to keep the original floorboards which are far more practical for family life and so easy to update with a coat of paint or varnish.'

All the renovation work was completed before moving in day, leaving Francesca a blank canvas to put her own stamp on. She decided to keep the white walls downstairs, a rather brave decision for a busy family home. 'We've added colour and texture throughout with furniture, accessories and artwork. I've always been a fan of white walls and don't mind touching up scuffs and marks,' she says. 'Our landlords are happy for us to make changes to the house which means we can add personality.'

One of the first spaces they tackled was the living room which they painted in a palette of chalky milk shades inspired by an architectural print the couple picked up on a holiday in Tuscany. The couple painted the wooden fireplace in the living room too. 'The dark wooden surround distracted from the fresh calm look I wanted to create. And once painted white, it transformed the room instantly into a bright and airy space,' she explains.

With little spare cash for new furniture, Francesca updated junk shop finds with inexpensive tins of white paint, instantly creating a serene look on a tiny budget. To finish the room, she then covered an old



In the dining room, Francesca has gone for a Scandi look mixed with thrifty finds and some of her illustrations adorn the original period fireplace. The dining chairs are painted in Old White from Annie Sloan. The twins' high chairs were a bargain find picked up from Ikea



Vintage kitchenalia adds vibrant pops of colour to this neutral kitchen. Hidden away under a curtain are their appliances

Good idea!

In the kitchen, Francesca has lined the back of the cupboards with floral print wrapping paper to add pretty pattern.



Good idea!

Be playful with salvaged wooden toys that can become pieces of art when you incorporate them in your room scheme.

sofa with white vintage blankets that her grandmother had crocheted. Her pistachio green upcycled shelves and muted pastels on the handmade sofa cushions completes her calming scheme. 'As an illustrator I love to add my own personal touch to furnishings. I made the cushions from old French linens, and then painted on the whimsical characters with textile paints,' she explains.

It took the family another year to find the time to start on the rest of the house. 'It wasn't until our wobbly dining table finally collapsed that we rushed out to Ikea for a new one that we could afford.' Not ▷

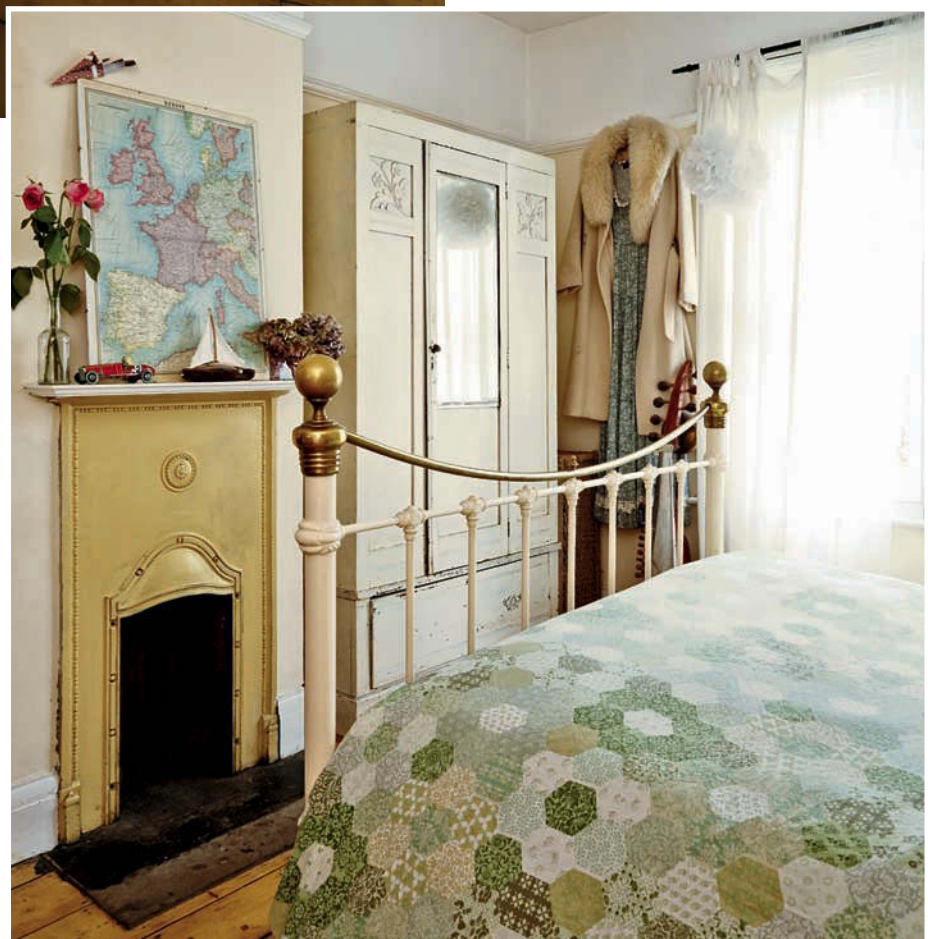


Francesca worked her thrifty magic on her bedroom so that it feels original, homely and light. The vintage bedstead has traditional timeless charm. To up the vintage vibe, Francesca dressed the bed with a patchwork bedspread and peacock feather cushions from a local charity shop



In this neutral bathroom, pattern has been added with a shower curtain decorated with a peacock Art Nouveau design, and retro-inspired Zara towels

'My favourite Saturday mornings are spent in Gloucester Road charity shops with Oscar and Martha.'



keen on the bleached wood colour of the table, Francesca spent the afternoon updating it with Annie Sloan paint for a Scandi vibe. 'I picked up the Ercol-style chairs for £10 each from a local second-hand store called Re:furnish. They were tired and tatty so I painted the seats and backs in white,' she says. 'The kitchen-diner is now the room we use most. The twins' toy boxes are stored in the built-in cupboards, and Oscar and Martha do their homework on the dining table. It's a real family space.'

Upstairs, the bedrooms have been decorated with a combination of family treasures, charity shop bargains and quirky finds which Francesca has been collecting for years. In the master bedroom she has blended pre-loved furniture with neutral wall colours. A green patchwork bedspread, picked up for just £5 from a charity shop, adds a splash of colour to the room. 'The brass bedstead was a 21st birthday gift



Good idea!

If your child's room has a neutral backdrop add explosions of colour with funky bedding. These crocheted blankets bring the space to life.

from my parents,' says Francesca. 'And it has come with me to every home and I love it.'

Originally the home office was where Francesca worked on her illustrations but since having the twins three years ago it has become their bedroom. Her mother made the colourful crochet blankets for the beds. Then Francesca introduced lots of storage with a vintage chest of drawers and some decorative shelves made from scaffolding planks that her dad made. A simple curtain was hung at the windows. 'The kids love it up here, it's small, bright and full of character.'

After four years of living in the house, the family are almost finished. What has surprised them all was how little they have spent in total. 'As a family of six, we've had to be clever with money and ideas. I think we have spent about £500 in total. But we've never had to compromise on our style,' she says. With a new baby due this spring Francesca and Jimmy are looking to build an eco-house on a piece of land nearby. As she explains: 'With everything I've managed to achieve on a small budget I feel confident we'll build a beautiful home without breaking the bank.'

Francesca's mum crocheted the bright bedspreads from scraps of wool, and the cushions came from Zara Home. The couple love to make toys for their children to play with. Francesca made the papier-mâché dolls house for the twins and Jimmy built the shelves from salvaged scaffold planks



5 IDEAS TO STEAL

STYLISH DINING

Choose a sleek design high chair to keep your dining room stylish.

Blames high chair with tray in red, £45 each, Ikea



FOLKY FINDS

Display pretty ceramics on open shelves and change your display with the seasons.

Columbia Road tea pot, £10; **teacup and saucer**, £8, both Bhs



PATTERN PERFECT

Mix and match motifs for a sophisticated take on vintage chic.

Sotblomster quilt cover and four pillowcases, £20, Ikea



DISPLAY PRETTY PIECES

Pretty padded hangers are great for delicate vintage clothes.

Set of two hangers, £12, Cath Kidston



A NEW LOOK

Revamp furniture with easy-to-use chalk paint from Annie Sloan.

Provence chalk paint, £18.95 per litre, Annie Sloan



Our new home looks like it's been here for years

Reclaimed building materials mixed with a modern country interior are the key to success in Karen and Peter Simpkins' home



Having the kitchen, dining and living space all open-plan really appealed to Karen. She's tied the space together with limestone flooring throughout. The blinds are from Linthorpe Interiors



The thought of moving home hadn't entered Karen Simpkins' head until an eye-catching new development came to her attention just five minutes down the road in Ingleby Barwick, Stockon-on-Tees.

With three young children she felt quite settled in her modern three-storey house, and with four bedrooms she didn't really need any extra space. However a quick browse on a property website to get some ideas for a new kitchen changed everything. 'I noticed that a development of four new homes was being built nearby to us in a quadrangle and just drove past out of curiosity,' says Karen. 'However, one of the builders spotted me, ushered me in and showed me around the building. Even though it was just a shell with no internal walls in place yet, I got a good sense of the space and just loved how different it was to other properties.'

Although the properties looked like barn conversions, they were actually new-builds. A local property developing firm, Preston Farm Developments, had knocked

Good idea!

Karen has tied the kitchen and dining spaces together by using the same fabric for the blinds at the windows.



Karen chose a chunky oak dining table from Barker & Stonehouse with a bench on one side. 'We can push it against the wall if we need more space,' she says

down some dilapidated 19th-century farm buildings on the plot and re-used the bricks, roof tiles and timbers in the new homes. They also incorporated lots of energy-efficient measures such as under-floor heating, rainwater harvesting and high levels of insulation.

'We never had any intention of moving as we were quite happy where we were, but when we saw the plans we were so impressed,' says Karen. 'I loved the location too. You feel like you're in the country overlooking a river with lovely views over open fields rather than on the edge of a housing estate.'

As the house wasn't yet finished, the couple could get involved and tweak the design early in the planning stage. This meant they were able to alter the first floor layout, sacrificing a third bathroom to give a bit more room for Isabel and George's bedrooms. 'It was previously designed as one large bedroom with an en suite but we decided to split it into two smaller bedrooms and lose the en suite,' she explains. 'We had four WCs in our last house and it was just too many to clean!'

Karen's favourite room is the open-plan living room/diner/kitchen, which has bi-fold doors to a patio area at the front. It was this room that really made the couple fall in love with the house. 'Although ▷



A large island unit was a must for Karen as it's so sociable, plus it gives extra storage space and houses the integral microwave and recycling bin. She chose a quartz worktop with oak edging on the breakfast bar to break up the large surface area

COME ON IN...



THE HOME
A four-bedroom new-build in Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees.

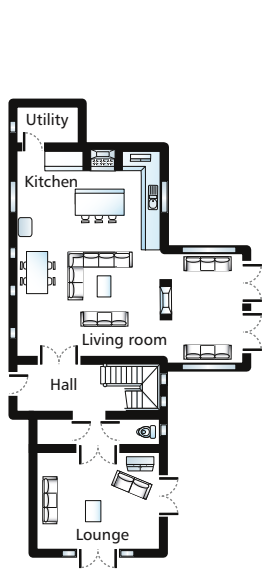
WHO LIVES HERE?
Karen Simpkins, 42, a paediatric nurse and her husband Peter, 44, an engineer, along with their three children, George, 14, Charley, 11, and Isabel, eight.

WHERE DO YOU SHOP?
'I like stores such as Barker & Stonehouse, Laura Ashley and Home Interiors, and love to get a bargain in the sales.'

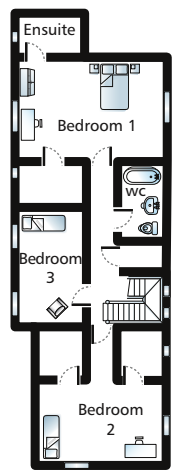
WHAT'S YOUR BEST BARGAIN BUY?
'It would have to be the large teal glass bowl in the living room which was £10 from TK Maxx, or the clock in the kitchen which was £35 from Barker & Stonehouse.'

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING HERE?
'The sense of community. Although I was a bit worried about living so close together in a quadrangle at first, it's turned out really well. Isabel plays with the little girl next door in the courtyard and the neighbours are lovely.'

Feature Karen Wilson **Photos** Katie Lee



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

For stockists see page 120

One of Karen's favourite stores is Barker & Stonehouse, where she found the rustic coffee table, cream silver plated earth bowl and Xian fresh stripe rug





'I never imagined years ago that I'd end up living in a house like this.'

we don't have any more space upstairs than in our last home, we have a lot more space downstairs which makes a big difference,' she says. 'In an ideal world we would have had next door's first floor layout, which is bigger, combined with our ground floor, but ultimately you spend most time downstairs so that seemed more important to us.'

As it's such a large room, the couple took a long time working out how they would live in the space. 'I knew we needed to create zones,' she says. 'So we opted for a dual-facing wood-burner dividing the two living spaces, which makes the most of the high ceiling. I was worried it might be too big, but I love it. The three big pendant lights also define the spaces well.'

This room also features a beautiful oak kitchen from Dean Hunter Kitchens, a firm recommended by the developer. It's painted in a mixture of Trenchcoat Grey and Chalk, both from Dulux, with quartz worktops and is designed around the rustic



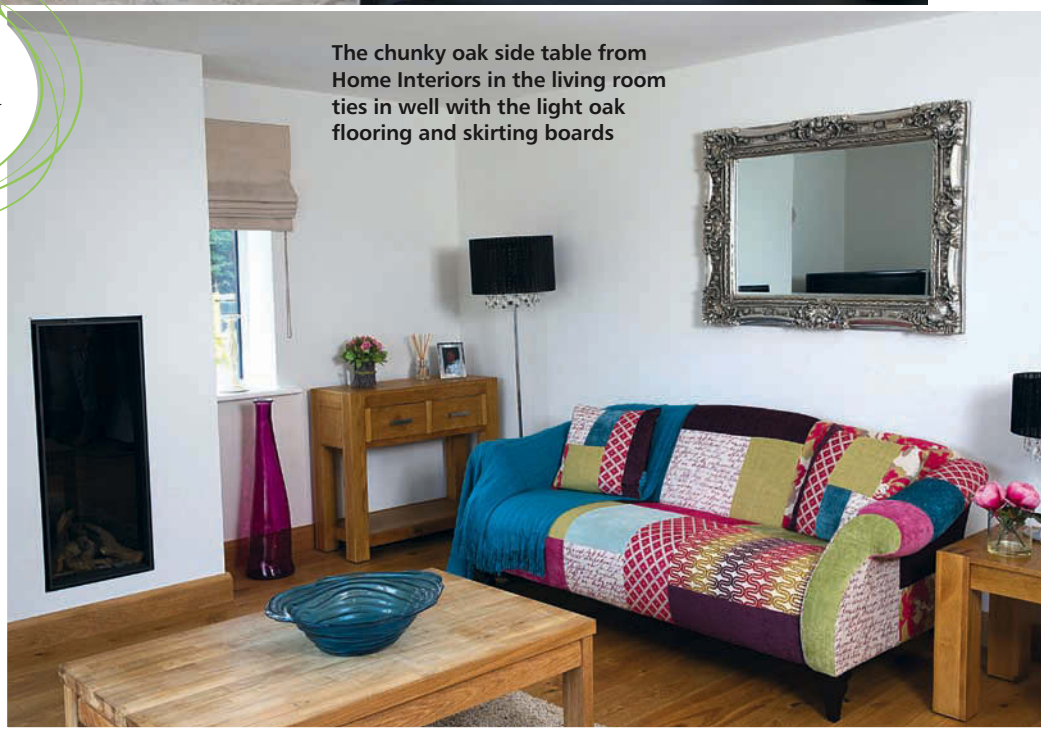
Karen has teamed furniture brought from her last house, such as the oak unit from Harveys, with new buys like the teal sofa from DFS and Hayden coffee table from Barker & Stonehouse

Good idea!

Don't automatically go for a horizontal fireplace as a narrower chimney breast may suit a vertical model instead.

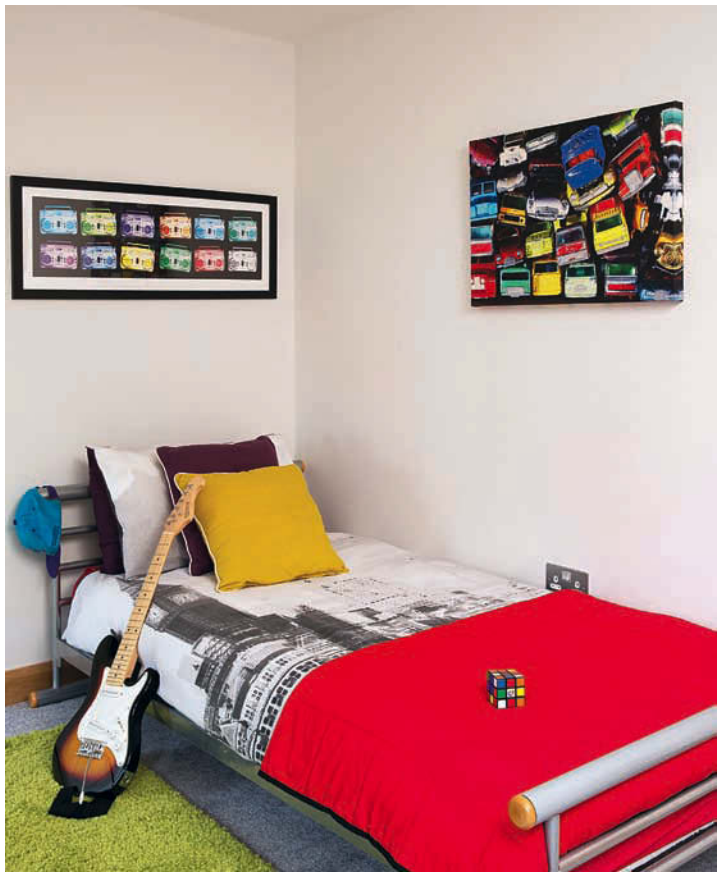
A bespoke fireplace from The Fire Centre has really helped to break up the open-plan space and gives off heat on both sides. Both the black corner sofa from Furniture Village and brown leather sofa from Harveys were brought from their last home, and have been lightened up with cushions from Next and Debenhams

Inglenook which houses the Rangemaster cooker. 'I prefer the Shaker-style to ultra modern units and it fits better with the feel of the house,' says Karen. 'It was important to have a large island as it's really sociable and breaks up the space too. The colour of the units was a compromise as I wanted a lovely soft sage green and ▷



The chunky oak side table from Home Interiors in the living room ties in well with the light oak flooring and skirting boards

Charley's bedroom has been brightened up with accents of bold primary colours such as the Mini pictures and bedding by Ben de Lisi at Debenhams



The couple have brightened up their wrought iron bed, which they've had since they first married, with a floral printed reversible throw and cushions from Next



As Karen opted for white furniture in Isabel's bedroom, the walls have recently been painted a grey-blue shade called Drizzle, by Little Greene, to provide a contrast



With sloping ceilings to two sides, the couple weren't able to buy any tall furniture for the master bedroom so they picked out a white chest and dressing table from Home Interiors to complement their fitted wardrobes



Peter wanted a charcoal, so we went for a green grey shade somewhere in the middle, which works really well.'

The ground floor also includes another living room across the hallway, a cloakroom and a utility room behind the kitchen. 'We spend most of our time in the open-plan room but it's nice to have a separate living room too,' says Karen, who chose a more vibrant colour combination of teal and hot pink for that room.

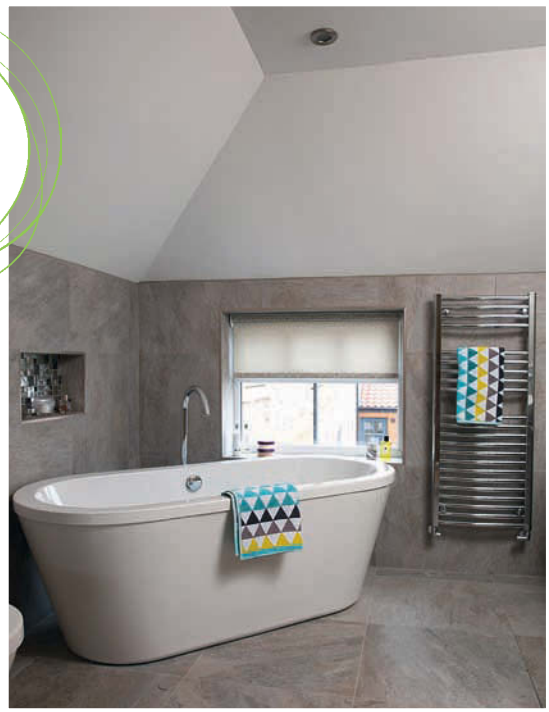
The new first floor layout works much better for them too, and features fitted wardrobes by the same company that made the kitchen. 'It's great having two bathrooms as we can use the one next to

‘I don’t really have a specific style. I just buy things I like when I spot them.’



Good idea!

Bring a splash of colour to a neutral bathroom scheme with colourful towels in the latest bold geometric designs.



The starting point for the main bathroom was the free-standing bath from James Hargreaves Bathrooms. By choosing the same wall and floor tiles, Karen’s created a luxurious hotel feel. The colourful geometric towels are from Next

our room while the kids tend to use the other one opposite,’ says Karen. ‘Ideally we would’ve liked an en suite but the wall between the master bedroom and bathroom was the only place we could put fitted wardrobes.’

Since moving in last summer the family have settled in very quickly. ‘As our new home is just five minutes from where we used to live, we still have the same friends nearby and the commute to work isn’t any different,’ says Karen. ‘But here it feels like we’re living in the countryside. It’s so peaceful you can really hear the birds singing in the morning.’ YH

5 IDEAS TO STEAL

INDUSTRIAL CHIC

Make a statement in the kitchen with a shimmering factory-style pendant light like Karen’s.



Studio pendant light in satin steel, £69, Made.com



OLD SCHOOL

An industrial bar stool with a worn wooden seat and iron frame makes a great contrast for a painted kitchen.

Canteen aged industrial wooden bar stool, £140, Alexander & Pearl



MAKE A STATEMENT

Be bold with a colourful statement sofa in a patchwork design such as this stylish button-back model.

Shout maxi sofa in patchwork, £899, DFS



MAD FOR MINIS

If you’re a fan of the iconic Mini like Karen’s son Charley, go for this colourful A4 print featuring 11 classic cars which can be personalised with your own words on the number plates.

Personalised Mini car print by Kiaco, £14, Notonthehighstreet



BRIGHTEN THE BEDROOM

Think floral and update those cushions and throws for a fresh new spring look in the bedroom without breaking the bank.

Pink floral throw, £34.99, HomeSense

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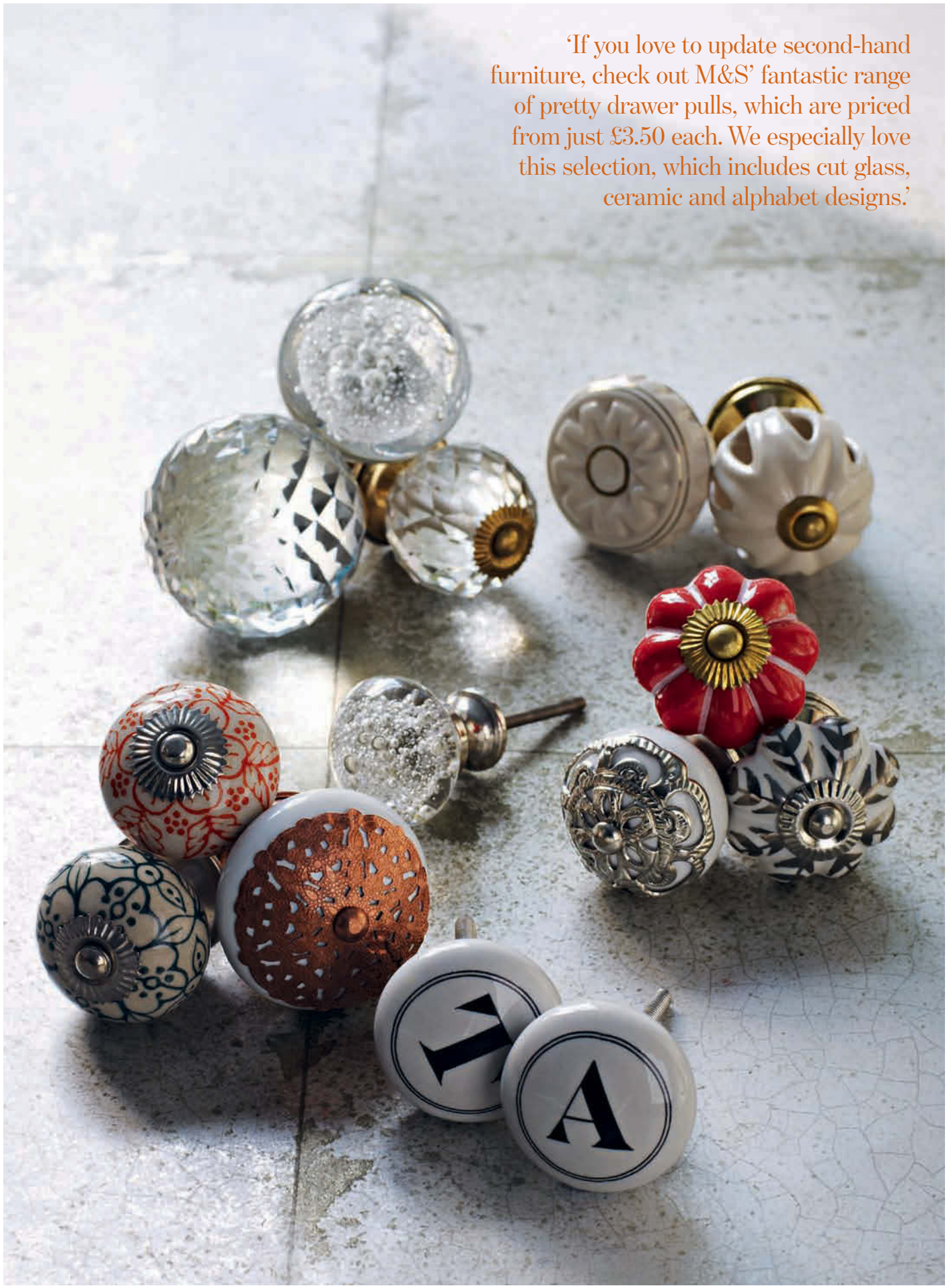
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'If you love to update second-hand furniture, check out M&S' fantastic range of pretty drawer pulls, which are priced from just £3.50 each. We especially love this selection, which includes cut glass, ceramic and alphabet designs.'



'A big comfortable sofa was high up on my list, and I found this one in Heal's for £1,500,' says Alexis. The grey goes with the walls, and you can always add colour with cushions and rugs.'

Good idea!

Give a retro touch by using an old chest as a coffee table, which doubles up as storage for extra throws, photo albums or DVDs.

I've made the most of the quirky shape of my apartment

Embracing the contemporary feel of her corner plot, while adding dramatic blocks of colour, Alexis Painter now has the characterful home she craved

Searching for an apartment to buy back at the beginning of 2011, Alexis Painter was getting fed up with bland boxy flats which didn't do anything for her at all. 'I was living in a rented flat in Whitechapel, and I'd decided I really liked east London, so started searching around Hackney, which is vibrant and full of cafés, restaurants, shops and has its own cinema. I knew I couldn't afford Islington, a bit further north, but Hackney is up and coming, and there's so much going on, plus it has great transport links and it's an easy journey to work.'

After seeing everything from modern flats to badly done conversions, Alexis' interest



Wanting her colourful paintings to be the main focus of the living room, Alexis painted the walls in Lamp Room Grey Estate emulsion by Farrow & Ball, and toned in her accessories to complement it



was sparked by the property details for her apartment. 'It's very early Victorian, and was originally a shop with accommodation above, on the corner of a street, so already I was hooked. It was converted into three apartments in the 1980s, and the bottom one, which I bought, is on two levels. There's a large triangular shaped room at street level and a kitchen/diner underneath that, with two bedrooms, a bathroom and a backyard on the other side of the stairs. It even has cobbled streets outside, so the history is always with you.'

Although the lower floor is technically a basement, a light well and large windows mean the bedrooms are light and bright, but it was the space that convinced Alexis into buying it. 'It was the size of the rooms, mainly the living room, kitchen and master bedroom that did it for me. And the amount of light that comes in through the large windows.'

The property had previously been owned by a couple with a design business who had their office upstairs and lived in the flat downstairs.

'It meant the upstairs had quite an industrial feel, which I liked, and I was really bowled over by the stairs which are steel. It's a lot more interesting than traditional banisters and it makes it all feel much more open. I know some people would have taken them out, but because ▷



The space at the back of the apartment is used regularly. The Painters sit and have breakfast there, and it's a great spot for BBQs and having friends over for a drink. Some artificial grass, a few plants and colourful furniture have brightened it up



With an all white kitchen, and a table she brought with her, Alexis has given the space a boost with contemporary red chairs, a present from her parents, and matching high-gloss shelving

COME ON IN...

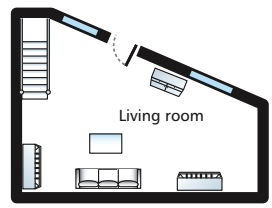


THE HOME
A two-bedroom split-level apartment in a Victorian building in Hackney, east London.

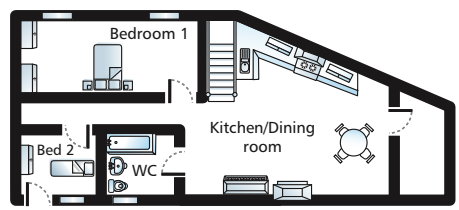
WHO LIVES HERE?
Alexis Painter, a journalist, and her husband Alex, a TV producer.

ANY DECORATING ADVICE?
'Bold colour is trickier to use in bedrooms and bathrooms where you want to be peaceful, so just use it in very tiny amounts. Kitchens are ideal, particularly if you start with a neutral background, and large living rooms can cope with strong colour, although it doesn't always need to be on the walls. Add to it with furniture, rugs and paintings. Also, don't skimp on buying a sofa. It's a major investment and should last you many years. Go and sit on every one you like the look of, and in different positions all along the sofa to make sure it's comfortable.'

WHAT'S NEXT?
'We've still got the spare bedroom to tackle, as it's a bit bland in there at the moment and is used as a bit of a dumping ground. It needs to become a home office and space for people to stay, so I'm going to start investigating sofa beds.'



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT

For stockists see page 120

Feature Stephanie Smith **Photos** David Giles



Opting to keep the good-quality white units in the kitchen, Alexis chose to keep everything as light as possible with new white brick tiles from Topps Tiles, bringing in colour with furniture and accessories

'In a flat or small house, keep the themes going. If you pick a bold colour, like red, you've got to keep using it, even in tiny amounts.'

◁ my natural style is contemporary anyway, I wanted to make a feature of them.'

Securing the flat in the summer of 2011, Alexis has taken it slowly on the decorating front, buying special pieces when she could afford them. 'Everything was plain, which was fine to cope with while I was thinking about what I'd really like, but I desperately wanted to bring in some colour, and grey, red, black and blue are my favourite tones. I tried to see the apartment as one big space. I also had some large paintings I brought with me, which give the living room a bit of an art gallery feel, so I had to take the paintings into consideration as well, which had all my favourite colours in anyway.'



With a limited budget, Alexis got her secret weapon involved, her parents, John and Linda. 'My dad trained as an architect and he's great at DIY. They are both happy to get stuck in, but I went through the whole apartment with my dad, deciding on what could be kept and where I could make the most difference with my money.'

Deciding that the plain white kitchen was in good condition and didn't need replacing, Alexis and her father decided to focus on the bathroom, ripping it out in October 2012, and putting in a new bathroom and re-tiling floor-to-ceiling. And she tackled the flat room-by-room every few months since, repainting each and putting together the look for the living room the following year.

'I'm an avid reader, and I needed somewhere for all my books, so shelving was a priority. I'd already decided to paint the walls grey, so I started to look at contemporary shelving. In the end I found what I wanted at Dwell, a grey gloss system in various sizes, so I've made a whole library section against one wall, plus other bookshelves, and I picked up my lamp and rug there too.'

The shelving and storage in the kitchen took a chunk out of Alexis's total budget of £15,000, as did the new bathroom, but she

The washing machine and dishwasher have been neatly tucked away under the stairs where they are out of sight of the other rooms and will make less noise



Taking out the old bathroom and putting in a new suite from Bathstore, Alexis opted for the Edwardian 560 basin and stand in the sale, for a retro look, as well as brick tiles grouted in grey



Good idea!

Alexis used a grey grout with the white tiles in her bathroom. Not only does it make the tiles stand out it is also easier to keep looking clean.

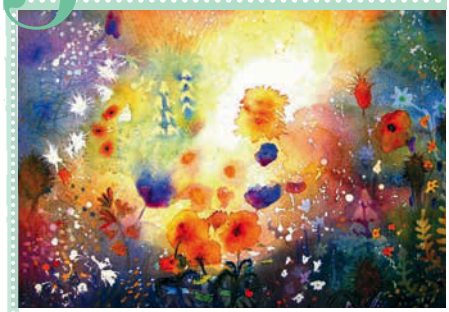
The master bedroom in the apartment is huge, with two large windows, and although it's technically a basement, there's a large light well so plenty of light comes in. The couple painted the walls a calming green, Arsenic Estate emulsion by Farrow & Ball

knows it's money well spent and has added to the value of the house.

The last room to be done was the master bedroom, once fiancé Alex moved in 18 months ago. 'We got married in spring last year and my flat was the sensible option as it's close to work for both of us, so we chose the pieces in the master bedroom together and got the lovely bed in a sale for £500. With Alex's stuff as well it feels like a real home for both of us and a great start to married life.' YH



5 IDEAS TO STEAL



ARTISTIC FLAIR

Alexis has brightened up her grey walls with some vibrant pieces of art.

Summer Garden print by Luisa Gaye Ayre, from £14.95 for 33cm x 40cm size, King & McGaw

BRIGHT DINING

Alexis has used bold red hints all around her home, including at the dining table.

Palermo red chair, £49, Tesco Direct





ADD COLOURFUL STRIPES

Inject colour into your bathroom with a selection of striped towels.

Renaissance Stripe towels, from £9 for a guest towel, Christy

STYLISH KITCHEN STORAGE

Hide away clutter with some sleek, streamlined kitchen storage solutions.



Metod kitchen units in Ringhult Red, from £117 for a base cabinet with two drawers, Ikea



BEE QUIRKY

Add a few fun prints as Alexis has done with cute bee cushions on the sofa.

Bee cushion, £14.99, Dobbies

We have a home fit for a chef

Liz and Max Waldron made their old cottage into the focus for a catering business



Nine years ago Londoners Max and Liz Waldron wanted to buy a weekend cottage. 'We began looking in the obvious places like Oxfordshire and Somerset,' says Liz. But after an 18-month search they ended up in a remote valley in Gloucestershire on the other side of the River Severn, having fallen for an ancient cottage in an old orchard. 'The previous owners had started to renovate it then run out of money,' says Liz. 'So the old flagstones had gone and there was concrete flooring everywhere. There was no kitchen, unless you count a room with a sink and a big boiler sitting in the middle of it, only one bathroom, and that was downstairs, with brick walls and plastic fittings and just two radiators, one fallen down, for the whole house. Pipework ran round the walls, one fireplace smoked badly – and there was a 36-foot deep well in the kitchen.'

The front part of the cottage was said to have been a two-up, two-down worker's





The couple installed a Norreskoven Mk 2 wood burner from Stoves & Flues Ltd. The curtain pole which turns a right angle was made by local blacksmith Gareth Thomas of Longhope



There is a sizeable drop to the lower level living room so Liz and Max's builder turned the dividing wall into a tall and wide bookcase on the living room side

dwelling 500 years before. It was extended in the 18th-century and again in Victorian times and now has several period features such as wooden window shutters, ancient heavy doors and lovely elm floorboards.

At first the couple, with daughter Marina, used the place for weekends, during which they employed a builder to install oil-fired central heating, rewire, conceal the pipework and lay slate flooring over the concrete screed. He also tanked and refurbished the downstairs bathroom then the couple repainted throughout in Farrow & Ball's Hardwick White, except for the living room, while Liz's brother Stephen Whiston who owns a company called Important Rooms, fitted out the kitchen with free-standing units. 'Then we had ▷

The curtains throughout the living area are made from hessian and give a neutral, rustic finish





Good idea!

Liz bought inexpensive hessian from a garden centre for the curtains, and had them interlined with fleece and backed with black-out fabric.

COME ON IN...



THE HOME

A four-bedroom extended Tudor cottage in Longhope, Gloucestershire, bought in 2005.

WHO LIVES HERE?

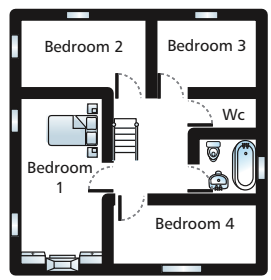
Liz Waldron, a creative director for an advertising company and her husband Max who owns and runs a catering company, Max Waldron Organics (01452 831443 www.maxwaldronorganics.com), with daughter Marina, 15, two cats, Beetle and Cola, two rabbits and seven hens.

ANY BARGAIN FINDS?

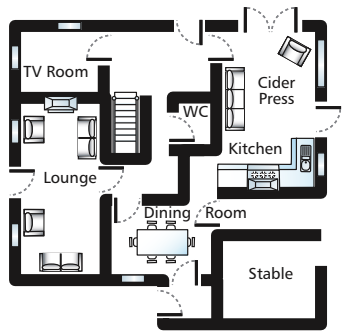
'To save on delivery costs when shopping for vintage finds, try Gumtree which will give you a local search of bargains in your neighbourhood. And, to create a feeling of space in a small house it's usually best to keep the walls pale and add colour with fabric, ornaments and foliage.'

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING HERE?

'The beautiful walks right out of our garden, canoeing down the River Wye, and the wonderful food and ingredients available locally for Max to cook with.'



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

For stockists see page 120

Feature and Styling Victoria Jenkins **Photos** Heather Gunn

This is the most important room in the house for Max, who is a chef with his own catering company, Max Waldron Organics. It used to be half of the cider barn and was converted by Mark Rich Building. Liz's brother, Steve Whiston, who has his own company, Important Rooms of Devizes, put in the new units which are made from reclaimed teak

great fun furnishing it in a rustic way,' says Liz. 'We visited auctions, junk shops and reclamation yards as we found items in this quiet part of the world astonishingly cheap. For example, we bought an antique Chesterfield for £250 from a junk shop and when the upholsterer came to re-cover it he said it was worth more like £1,250.'

Five years ago when Marina was due to go to senior school the couple decided to rent out their home in Islington, and move full-time into the cottage, commuting to London as and when needed. 'We are both freelance so could be flexible,' says Liz.

The best of their furniture came with them to Longhope and, oddly enough, despite its more sophisticated style, blended in well with the rustic look.



With Max being a chef with his own catering company the biggest project now was to convert an old adjoining cider barn into a new efficient kitchen. They did this by knocking through the old kitchen wall. The cider barn was on a lower level because it and the cottage are on a slope but the builders raised half of it so that you can now walk straight from the cottage into the new kitchen. The other half of the barn is still lower, and is where the old cider press once stood, now accessed by some stairs. It has now become another living room and both of these new rooms were laid with the same black slate floors as the other main rooms, this time with under-floor heating.

Liz's brother again came to the rescue with some smart fitted kitchen units of reclaimed teak, leather strap handles and Silestone worktops, sold to them at a handsome discount.

As for the cider press – 'Alas, the previous owner had donated it to Hereford Cider Museum,' says Liz. 'Once a donkey

The big oak and elm table cost £600 from a junk shop in Ross-on-Wye and the assorted old dining chairs came from more junk shops and auction houses. Beneath the black slate floor is a 36-foot deep well

The egg box, labelled Glos. Marketing Society, Ltd, was found in the stable and is now used as a coffee table. The desk is Danish and came from a Lilley Road dealer

The white cupboard was already there as was the wood-burner, although it cost the couple £1,000 to clean the chimney and add a filter. The coffee table is an 1880s Chinese camphor wood trunk which Max's parents gave them as a wedding gift. The huge mirror also came from a Lilley Road antique shop in London and the sampler over the wood burner is thought to be Victorian. The couple painted the window frames and shutters in Farrow & Ball's London Stone



'We bought an antique Chesterfield for £250 from a junk shop and when the upholsterer came to re-cover it he said it was worth more like £1,250.'

Good idea!

Liz bought a job lot of terracotta roof tiles at a reclamation yard then used them for the garden path leading to the front door.



In here and in the other two bedrooms Max sanded the floorboards. The eco-wallpaper is Harry's Garden by Louise Body, printed on chlorine-free paper sourced from managed forests and using water-based inks. 'It's expensive at £60 a roll but we think it's totally worth it,' says Liz

would have patiently plodded round in circles to operate it.'

It was their architect who, after they'd removed an unwanted second staircase, suggested there was now space under the eaves for a separate bathroom and shower room. 'We'd never have thought it possible,' says Liz.

Another big project recently was to repair the roof. 'Three workmen removed all the tiles, repaired or replaced the beams, put in insulation and then put the tiles back on,' says Liz. 'It's so much warmer now. One bonus was we found we had bats up there! They still are there as they're protected.'

Out in the garden there were a number of outbuildings and greenhouses, one of which contained an old but fruitful grape vine. 'So now Max makes our own wine, plus cider from our apples trees and uses eggs from our hens,' says Liz. 'Best of all is the discovery that a previous owner in about 1860 was a farmer who had promoted the Blaisdon plum, a local species. It became quite famous and now Max uses the same plum in many of his recipes including his delicious Blaisdon plum ice cream.'

Liz finishes, 'We love it here. It's quite wild in the Forest of Dean and the views from our house are stunning, not a house to be seen from some of our windows. And there are some surprising benefits. Some workmen came to repoint the house and add a porch to the back door. It was they who told us to get a licence from the Post Office so we could fish in the Longhope brook in the valley. We had no idea it was allowed but we bought the licence for £15 then Max went off with them and their fishing gear. When they all came back with seven big trout Max cooked the fish for supper and we all sat round enjoying them with some of Max's home-made bread. They were followed by, guess what? His own Blaisdon plum ice-cream! You could never do that in Islington!' YH



The pig sty has now become a summer house and has an outdoor barbecue and food preparation area. Much of the furniture has been created using old wooden pallets which Max then fitted with aluminium and rubber wheels





Good idea!

The unusually-shaped bathroom was created in the space that was left when a second staircase was removed.

‘It’s quite wild in the Forest of Dean and the views from our house are stunning.’

The original floorboards were painted in Hardwick White by Farrow & Ball and the antique taps and basin are from an Islington reclamation yard. Liz found the bath at Beechfield Reclamation Company near Devizes and loved its ball and claw feet. ‘Oddly it originally came from Denmead, a village in Hampshire where my grandparents lived,’ she says

Liz’s grandmother crocheted the pretty bedspread many years ago. The Ikea curtain rods are hung with curtains made from painters’ cloths with blackout blinds behind. The prints over the bed show Oxford where Max met the artist Francis Hamel Cook while at university there. The huge mirror is another find from a Lilley Road antiques dealer



5 IDEAS TO STEAL



ADD A COLOUR BOOST

Inject colour into an otherwise neutral scheme with upholstered furniture.

Lucile sofa in midnight blue, £879, Living It Up



RUSTIC PIECES

Use rustic-looking jugs to hold utensils in the kitchen, or to display flowers.

Rustic stoneware jar, £22.50, Berry Red

STYLISH SEATING

Revamp a corner of your home with a retro-style hanging chair.

Jaliyah hanging chair, £299, Out There Interiors



SOFT UNDERFOOT

Add comfort with a selection of natural rugs.

Fusion Ivory wool rug, from £150 for 150cm x 80cm size, Luku Home





BEAUTIFUL BIRDS

Liz has used a pretty birdcage wallpaper for an interesting, quirky look.

Multi Birdcage wallpaper, £15 per roll, Next

ARE YOU ABOUT TO TRANSFORM YOUR HOUSE ON A TIGHT BUDGET?

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BBC TWO

Are you desperate and needing help, advice and inspiration on a home improvement project that will be completed by Autumn 2015? Would you appreciate expert input to create an amazing home with your budget?



The makers of BBC TWO's **THE £100K HOUSE: TRICKS OF THE TRADE** are returning with a second series. We are looking for people with tight budgets who are desperate to TRANSFORM their homes.

Does your heart sink every time you arrive at your door? Do you believe your overcrowded home has untapped potential but have no idea how to unlock it? Are you fed up with dark cramped spaces and long for a fresh new start? Would you love a new bathroom but your dreams are bigger than your budget? Can you visualise your perfect home but live in the exact opposite? Or, have you spent hours agonising over your new design and would be prepared to have a fresh opinion?

Award winning architect **PIERS TAYLOR** is exploring new **LOW COST** ways to create incredible homes.

We want to hear from you if you are about to embark on a project to transform part or all of your home - you just need a modest budget and be open to design ideas.

If you're interested in finding out more about the series, Remarkable Television would like to hear from you. Please get in touch, sending your name, contact number and a brief outline of your project to the following e-mail address:
house@endemoluk.com

Please note that Remarkable Television (the producers of the show) are not always able to respond to every interested applicant. We will use any information provided by you for the purposes of selecting participants for the programme, research for and production of the programme. We will only share information with the commissioning broadcaster our insurers and any independent contractors involved in the programme.

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Food & Drink

Give your diet and lifestyle a healthy boost



This month we love...

Tamari is a rich soy sauce perfect for seasoning Asian dishes as well as adding depth to stews and marinades. The difference between this and usual soy sauce is that it's made without wheat, making it a good gluten-free substitute for Coeliacs. Try Yutaka Tamari Soy Sauce, available from Sainsbury's, priced at £2.19.



If you do one thing this month...

Head to Bristol this month to check out Food Connections, an exciting food festival running from the 1st-9th May. Divided into six themes: land and growing, wellbeing, feasting and festivities, get cooking, brain food and families, there are around 200 events happening over the nine days, including feeding 5,000 people using food waste, a spice festival and a jerk chicken competition. Visit www.bristolfoodconnections.com for information.



3 ways with... nectarines

- To make nectarine and muscovado ice cream, gently heat **300ml full-fat milk**, **300ml double cream** and **1 tbsp vanilla bean paste**, until it just starts to bubble and remove from the heat. Cool for 15 minutes. Whisk **4 egg yolks** with **150g dark muscovado sugar** until thick then pour the milk mixture into the bowl while still whisking. Heat until thick enough to cover the back of a wooden spoon. Cool as quickly as possible in the fridge then add **250g nectarine flesh**, half puréed and half cut into small chunks and combine. Pour into a lidded container and freeze, whisking it every hour for 3-4 hours.
- Crush **8 ginger nut biscuits**, mix with **50g butter**, melted. Halve **2 nectarines** and remove stones. Top with the biscuit mixture. Drizzle with **honey or maple syrup**, then bake in the oven at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4, for 8 minutes or until golden. Serves 2.
- Nectarines make a juicy addition to salads and work really well with cheeses such as feta, blue cheese and Parmesan, as well as prawns, Prosciutto, chicken and beef.

Try me...

To make a healthy, nutty chocolate spread, combine 150g Meridian smooth peanut butter, 3 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder, 20g unrefined golden icing sugar, 1 tbsp Meridian barley malt extract, 3 tbsp peanut oil, and pinch of salt. Keep in the fridge for up to 3 months in a sterilised jar. For recipes visit meridianfoods.co.uk.



Eat me...

Make preparation easier with Jamie Oliver's ready-to-eat pouches, available from Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Co-op, priced £2.29. Using healthy grains and pulses without unnecessary additives or bulking agents, you can make each meal different with the six varieties – including curried chickpeas, sweet chilli spelt and sundried tomato quinoa.



Buy me...



Lovers of Italian food will enjoy cooking from My Simple Italian by Theo Randall, £25, Ebury Press. Whether you're after a recipe that you can whip up in a speedy 20 minutes, or a labour of love that you can take at a more leisurely pace, this book has it all. The overall theme is of good Italian food that is relaxing and enjoyable to make at home, using just a few quality ingredients.

CHECK OUT WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK/FOOD FOR MORE TASTY RECIPES

Feature Laura Higgins **Food Connections image** Adam Gasson

Feel-good flavours

Leading a clean eating revolution, these ladies have all released recipe books packed full of wholefoods and free of refined nasties. Here's a taster of our favourites that will leave you feeling energised, and with a healthy glow



Eggplant, pomegranate and minted quinoa salad



YOU WILL NEED

✔1 courgette, sliced ✔1 aubergine, cut into bite-sized pieces ✔4 garlic cloves ✔80ml cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling ✔Celtic sea salt ✔270g cooked quinoa ✔juice of 2 lemons ✔1 tbsp grated lemon zest ✔1 bunch of mint, leaves only, plus extra, to serve ✔1 bunch of coriander, leaves only, plus extra to serve ✔1 pomegranate ✔2 avocados, peeled and sliced into wedges ✔4 small spring onions, chopped ✔125g slivered almonds

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.
- Place the courgette, aubergine and garlic on a baking tray, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and roast for about 35 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool.
- Meanwhile, place the quinoa in a bowl with the lemon juice, zest and olive oil. Combine well. Place in a salad bowl with all the other ingredients and serve topped with extra mint and coriander leaves.

Encouraging people to live a healthy lifestyle, Lee Holmes has developed over 120 veggie recipes for her latest book, to let people know that 'eating real, whole, unprocessed and nutrient-rich food is the best health insurance policy we have.'



Supercharged Food: Eat Clean, Green & Vegetarian by Lee Holmes, £14.99, Murdoch Books. **Photography**: Steve Brown and Cath Muscat

Lee's top tip

'Aubergine has vitamins and minerals in spades. It's rich in manganese, folic acid and thiamine, the mineral that helps convert blood sugar into glucose for energy. It also contains the antioxidant nasunin which has been shown to protect brain cells from free-radical damage.'

SERVES 4

Photo of Melissa and Jasmine Hemsley by Nick Hopper



Pablo's Cajun chicken

YOU WILL NEED

For the chicken ✔180g ground almonds or sun flour (ground sunflower seeds) ✔2 eggs ✔6 pieces of chicken, use a mix of drumsticks and thighs, skin on ✔1 tbsp ghee ✔sea salt and black pepper **For the spice mix** ✔3 tsp hot smoked paprika or 2½ tsp smoked sweet paprika with ½ tsp cayenne pepper ✔1½ tsp ground cumin ✔1½ tsp sea salt ✔1 tsp dried thyme ✔1 tsp dried oregano ✔¾ tsp onion powder, optional ✔¾ tsp garlic powder, optional

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6 and line a baking tray with baking parchment.
- Mix the ground almonds and ingredients for the spice mix. In a second bowl, beat the eggs.
- Dip the chicken pieces, one at a time, in the egg, then coat in the mix of ground almonds and spices and lay on the baking tray.
- Gently heat the ghee and drizzle it over the pieces. Bake for 45 minutes until golden and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper.



Sisters Melissa and Jasmine Hemsley make wholefood recipes that are packed with nutrients and flavour whilst being free of grains, gluten, high-starch and refined sugar. Leading the spiralizer revolution, we can't get enough of courgetti, and their secret weapon, gut-healing bone broth.

The Art of Eating Well by Melissa and Jasmine Hemsley, £25, Ebury Press. **Photography**: Nick Hopper

Photo of Ella Woodward by Tommy Clarke





Coconut Thai curry with chickpeas

SERVES 4

YOU WILL NEED

✔2 x 400ml tins coconut milk ✔2 x 400g tins tomatoes ✔2-3cm fresh ginger, peeled and grated ✔1-2 tsp chilli flakes ✔1 large butternut squash ✔2 medium aubergines ✔handful of fresh coriander, finely chopped ✔1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained ✔3 tsp brown miso paste

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6. Put the coconut milk, tomatoes, ginger and chilli into a saucepan with a sprinkling of salt and pepper and allow it to heat until boiling.
- As it heats up, peel the squash and cut both the squash and the aubergines into bite-sized pieces. Add these to the pan.
- Allow the mixture to cook for about 30 minutes in the oven, at which point add the coriander and chickpeas to the pan with the miso and place the pan back in the oven for 30 minutes. It's ready when the squash is soft.

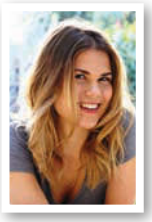
Ella's top tip

'I love this served with brown rice, buckwheat or brown rice pasta. If you don't like chickpeas, you can leave these out. You can also substitute any of the veggies; cauliflower, courgettes and sweet potatoes are all delicious.'



After being diagnosed with a debilitating illness, Ella Woodward healed herself through her diet. Now she has put her collection of recipes together, all of which are wholefood and plant-based, free from meat and anything processed, including dairy, sugar and gluten.

Deliciously Ella by Ella Woodward, £20, Yellow Kite © Ella Woodward 2015. **Photography**: © Claire Winfield



Raw chocolate avocado mousse

YOU WILL NEED

✔1 ripe avocado, stoned and flesh scooped out ✔1 ripe banana, peeled ✔3 tbsp coconut oil ✔4 tbsp raw cacao powder ✔pinch sea salt ✔100ml almond milk, coconut milk or rice milk ✔1 handful frozen raspberries

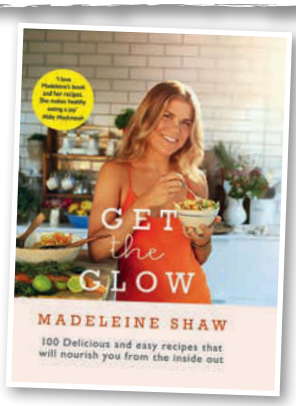
DIRECTIONS

- Blend the avocado, banana, coconut oil, cacao powder and salt. Slowly add the milk until the mixture becomes creamy; add a little extra milk if it isn't creamy enough.
- Pour the mousse into two ramekins or glasses, put them in the freezer for 30 minutes before transferring to the fridge. Crumble the raspberries over the top of each dessert.



SERVES 2

Nutritional health coach, Madeleine Shaw's new book aims to have you glowing from the inside with her gut-healing, wheat- and sugar-free recipes, all using ingredients that can be found in the supermarket and won't break the bank.



Get the Glow: 100 delicious and easy recipes that will nourish you from the inside out by Madeleine Shaw, £20, Orion Books. Published on 23rd April 2015.



SERVES 12-14

Lisa's top tip

'Made with a vegan crust, this cheesecake is surprisingly delicious – bursting with antioxidants from the blueberries. Cheesecakes are always a good place to start when making raw desserts because the process is so quick and simple. And what's more exciting is that it's wheat-, gluten- and dairy-free.'



Raw blueberry cheesecake

YOU WILL NEED

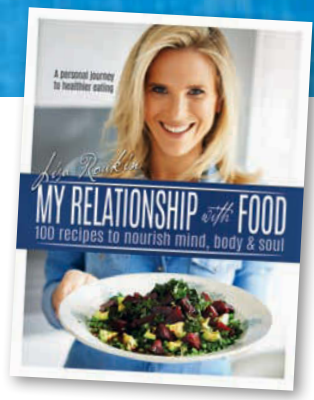
For the blueberry chia seed topping
✔240g blueberries ✔4 tsp agave nectar ✔6 tsp chia seeds ✔2 tsp lemon juice
For the crust ✔100g macadamia nuts ✔150g blanched almonds ✔50g desiccated coconut ✔200g dates, pre-soak if hard ✔3 tsp lemon juice ✔1 pinch sea salt
For the cheesecake layer ✔250g cashews, soaked overnight in water, then rinsed and drained on paper towel until ready to use ✔60ml coconut oil ✔60ml agave nectar, maple syrup or honey ✔2 tsp custard powder ✔5 tsp lemon juice ✔100g blueberries

DIRECTIONS

- Line the base and sides of 20cm non-stick springform tin with parchment paper.
- To make the chia topping, place the blueberries in a food processor and blend until smooth. Sieve over a bowl to omit the skins and seeds. Add the agave nectar, lemon juice, and chia seeds. Mix together then refrigerate for 2 hours.
- For the crust, place the macadamia, almonds and coconut into a food processor and pulse until a chunky sandy consistency. Place into a clean bowl. Add the dates, lemon and salt to the food processor, blend until smooth and then add the macadamia nut mixture back in, and blend until it forms a ball.
- Place the nut and date mixture into your prepared tin, press down firmly and place in the freezer.
- Place all cheesecake filling ingredients, except the blueberries, into your food processor and blend for 5 minutes until completely smooth.
- Remove the crust after 10 minutes from the freezer. Pour about ½ of the filling mixture onto the crust and smooth with a spatula, then place back in the freezer.
- Add the blueberries to the remaining filling and blend on high until smooth, then pour onto the first layer of filling. Place in freezer until solid, about 2 hours.
- Add the chia seed topping. The seeds will have started to congeal together so loosen them slightly, then smooth over the cheesecake and decorate with blueberries and place back in the fridge to set for 1 hour. Release the cake from the tin when ready to serve.

Using easily-sourced ingredients, Lisa Roukin, a professional chef, has put together a collection of 100 gluten-free recipes that are not heavy on the carbs and don't use refined sugar. The book is an honest insight into Lisa's challenges around body image and eating.

My Relationship with Food by Lisa Roukin, £25, self-published.
Photography: David Munns




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Home IMPROVEMENT

Turn the page for garden updates to make the most of your outdoor space





Feature Lisa Hibberd

Halfway house

If you're planning a kitchen revamp, why not think outside the box a little when using tiles? Providing you choose a design that is suitable for use on both walls and floors, you can create a unique and striking look by tiling the floor and halfway up the walls. In addition to creating a smart, sophisticated scheme, this is a highly practical solution, with the tiles working as a splashback as well as a hard-wearing floor covering. Plus, it will avoid damage from any scuffs and scratches in this busy room. We love Topps Tiles' Pompeii large format porcelain tiles, shown here in black, which are priced at £39.94 per square metre.

Under pressure



Pressure washers are great for blasting away dirt from outdoor surfaces, while the power of steam is ideal for a deep clean – and now you can combine the two with the latest machine from Vax. The Powerwash Plus Steam offers a powerful 2000W pressure washer and an built-in steam cleaner, making it perfect for many outdoor jobs, such as cleaning the barbecue, freshening up garden furniture and spring cleaning the patio. It's mounted on wheels so that it can be moved around easily, and the hose and cable give a total reach of 11 metres. With a selection of additional accessories available too, it's a really handy buy.

Powerwash Plus Steam,
around £279.99, Vax

Perfect finish



Tried and trusted paint company, Little Greene, has added two new finishes to its range of exterior paints. Intelligent Exterior Eggshell and Tom's Oil Eggshell are both designed specifically for exterior woodwork, joinery and metalwork, and both have a low-sheen finish that's perfect for outdoor updates. The Intelligent Eggshell is water-based, low-VOC and self-priming, meaning that it can be applied straight onto new and bare wood, while Tom's Oil Eggshell is oil-based, making it a hard-wearing choice. Prices start from £29 per litre.

Create bespoke storage



Perfect for both beginners and more experienced DIYers, ContiBoard is a great material for building storage, shelving and other projects around the home. This ready-cut, wood-mix board comes in packs of two in a choice of measurements or cut-to-size, so you can order exactly how much you need to avoid wastage. It's now available in four colours, including Liquorice, Toffee, Nut Crunch and Vanilla Ice, so there's no need to paint, stain or varnish. Prices start from £24 for a pack of two boards which includes standard delivery within the UK.

Reader offer

ContiBoard is offering *Your Home* readers 20% off the range. Simply enter the code yourhome20 when ordering at www.conti.co.uk, before the closing date of 31st May 2015. Offer subject to availability. Discount code cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.

FOR MORE EXPERT ADVICE AND CASE STUDIES GO TO WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK



This octagonal Prima Andrea small gazebo makes an attractive focal point in a smaller garden and is supplied painted or in a choice of natural shades, from £2,000, www.gardenaffairs.co.uk

Enhance your home with

Smarten up your outdoor space with our expert advice and handy hints

Feature Andrea Dean

It's easy to ignore the inadequacies of our patios and gardens when we only use them for a few months of the year. Inside our homes, we wouldn't put up with problems such as uneven floors, lack of storage or rooms that are uncomfortably bright to sit in, yet many of us ignore similar issues when they're outdoors. Now's the ideal time to tackle them head on, as by adding new features, replacing what's there or going for a complete redesign, you can make your outdoor space far more practical, attractive and easier to maintain.

1 DECKING

Timber decking can be used to extend your outside living space or to add a separate area for relaxing or dining. The deck may sit flush with the ground or be raised on a platform, especially useful if you need to level out a sloping garden. Choose between grooved or smooth boards, available in a range of widths and thickness, or easy-fit square deck tiles. Softwoods, such as pine and cedar, are cheaper than hardwoods such as oak and teak, but less durable. Seal and protect timber decking with a suitable exterior stain, these are available in a wide range of colours to suit your garden design. Timber will also need cleaning every year – a pressure washer is an ideal gadget to invest in for this job, and will also be useful for patios. Decking can be slippery when wet, so treat with a paint-on, anti-slip coating such as Watco Decksafe. If you don't want to deal with the upkeep of timber, consider an alternative such as a composite material which looks like wood but is maintenance-free.



In this urban garden by www.gardenhousedesign.co.uk, wooden floors open out onto decking outside, and white limestone slabs lead through the garden



Make a statement in your garden by splashing out on a stunning shed, such as this National Garden Scheme design from The Posh Shed Company



Ronseal's Ultimate Protection decking stain gives a long-lasting finish, and comes in 12 shades, including charcoal which contrasts beautifully with lush green foliage, www.ronseal.co.uk



Transform a tired shed with a durable, weather-resistant exterior paint and it will keep its good looks for years to come, from www.littlegreene.com

outdoor improvements

2 PAVING

When paving a path, patio or the entire garden, your main choices are natural stone, concrete or brick. Always get samples and view in both wet and dry conditions before deciding. Slate, granite and sandstone are among the many natural stone products, although most can be replicated by more budget-friendly, man-made paving. Porcelain paving is the new kid on the block. It can be matched with indoor tiling, comes in a variety of finishes, including wood, and requires minimal maintenance. Riven – or rough-hewn – slabs suits most outside spaces, though for a contemporary feel, go for a smooth sawn stone.

3 PORCHES AND DOOR CANOPIES

A porch can transform your home's appearance as well as providing protection from the weather while you're unlocking the door or peeling off your wellies. Adding a porch will create an area for storing coats and shoes, though make sure it complements the original frontage. When space is limited, a canopy above a door will offer shelter while taking up minimal room. As an alternative to more standard timber and tiled canopies, ironwork designs suit both contemporary and traditional properties and can be customised with trellis panels to support climbing plants.

4 SHEDS, GAZEBOS AND SUMMERHOUSES

The previously humble shed has become far more than a place for storing bikes, tools and garden equipment. Sheds are now used as offices and dens, and kitted out to the same standards as rooms inside the home. Their functional appearance is all part of their charm, but if you'd prefer to retreat to a more elegant garden building, why not splash out on a gazebo or summerhouse? Gazebos are open-sided structures, whereas summerhouses have doors and windows, and can be double-glazed and insulated for year-round use. They're sold as kits or supplied ready-assembled and come in a variety of sizes and shapes.

TURN OVER FOR MORE ADVICE ▷



Bradstone's Traditional Riven paving in buff or grey creates a stylish, understated look, whatever the setting



Wickes can always be relied on for a comprehensive selection of outdoor paving, including these slabs in Calder Brown, £51.98 per square metre



You'll get so much more use out of the garden if you invest in a veranda that's designed to look as if it's always been part of your home. This traditional veranda has an aluminium frame that can be powder-coated in any colour, from £5,000, www.nationwideltd.co.uk

5 VERANDAS AND AWNINGS

A veranda is a glass-roofed canopy that stretches out from the back of the house above a patio or deck, usually supported by metal or timber posts. It creates a covered, sheltered area for eating, relaxing or enjoying the garden without having to be too reliant on the weather. Consider carefully exactly where it joins the house, so that it sits comfortably with existing windows and doesn't obscure views. Weather-resistant, retractable fabric awnings allow you to control shade and light. The latest designs incorporate weather sensors, and can be programmed to open automatically when the sun is shining.

▼ **In an aged zinc finish, this metal porch is both functional and decorative, from £1,495. Any size can be made to order, from www.garden-requisites.co.uk**

More improvements to consider

- Conceal ugly wheelie bins with screening or a timber cover – try www.aplaceforeverything.co.uk or www.gardentrading.co.uk for some good options.
- Light the garden to show off interesting features. Get advice from www.johncullenlighting.co.uk.
- Why not spruce up the shed with a couple of coats of colourful, weather-resistant paint?
- Lay gravel or slate chippings over a weed suppressing membrane for a quick, easy and inexpensive transformation.
- Incorporate seating into the landscaping in a compact, urban garden.

Useful contacts

- **www.bradstone.com** is the go-to site for all types of garden paving.
- **www.gardenaffairs.co.uk** specialises in summerhouses, gazebos, sheds and other garden buildings.
- **www.garden-requisites.co.uk** manufactures traditional wirework and iron-work door canopies and porches.
- **www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk** stocks a wide range of fencing and decking products.
- **www.nationwideltd.co.uk** supplies stylish verandas and awnings.

6 FENCING

Replacing tatty fencing can make a huge difference to your garden. Think about whether you want closed panels for privacy, or prefer a more open design – for example trellis – or a combination of the two. Smooth boards are more contemporary, while textured, rough-surfaced timber will complement a cottage garden. Most fence panels are supplied in a standard six-foot width and several heights, and are supported by timber, metal or concrete posts if free-standing. Try fixing low-rise fencing on top of low walls, or slatted or willow panels all round a walled, courtyard garden.





Contemporary slatted fencing will help you to maintain privacy while letting light filter through so your garden's not left in the dark, from www.gardentrellis.co.uk

CASE STUDY

'Our summerhouse enables us to enjoy the garden all year round'



▲ Georgina is proud to have breathed new life into a neglected house and garden

As an interior designer, Georgina Martin looked forward to the tricky challenge of transforming a run-down 200-year-old cottage nobody else wanted to buy, but when it came to sorting out the sorry-looking outside space, she found herself stuck for ideas. 'The garden was so neglected it was unusable,' she remembers. 'Apart from being waterlogged and infested with weeds, there was no seating area and no privacy. It was no wonder the house had been on the market for such a long time!'

After refurbishing inside the house, Georgina eventually stripped the garden back, removing the overgrown shrubs, worn-out turf and concrete along with the tumbledown shed and broken fence. At this point she called in a garden designer friend to help her achieve her dream of a family-friendly, low-maintenance cottage garden. 'The biggest obstacle was the level of soil around the house,' she explains. 'It was banked so high that it was causing damp issues, so we excavated to a depth of 30cm to cure the problem and created an interesting sunken patio.'



▲ A well-insulated summerhouse, comfortably furnished and with electricity, offers additional living space that can be used all year round



There's plenty of space for the family to enjoy the garden even when it's too cold to sit outside. Interior designer Georgina has ramped up the comfort factor with piles of soft green cushions on the inexpensive Ikea sofa

In place of the old shed, Georgina and her husband David decided to invest in a more substantial summerhouse, to provide an all-weather outdoor room, while at the same time guaranteeing the seclusion she craved. 'We chose the dimensions carefully to fill the width of the garden and give us complete privacy,' she explains. She painted the exterior walls a soft grey-green to blend in with the surroundings, but left the natural timber exposed on the inside for a cosy, warm atmosphere. The furniture was kept simple – there's an Ikea sofa, a second-hand chest of drawers and voile blinds – but Georgina couldn't resist hanging a smart chandelier from the vaulted ceiling. 'Installing electricity was an expense we agonised over but we figured it was worth it to create an additional living space that we can use all year round,' she admits. 'It's become the perfect place for the family to chill out or read a book when it's not warm enough to sit outside.'

Feature Gill Rothwell **Photos** David Giles

WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

WIN! A Baxi boiler

worth £2,500!

Take the worry out of winter heating bills with a new Baxi boiler

With summer on the horizon, heating your home may be the last thing on your mind. However, many homeowners are still feeling the pinch from the last cold snap as they struggle to recover from the hefty winter energy costs landing at their door.

To avoid the heating bill hangover, preparation is key. The summer is a heating engineer's quietest period, making it the perfect time to find out what your heating system might need to make it more efficient, and to shop around for the best deal. Plus, getting your system in order while you don't need your heating on means you won't be left feeling blue when winter comes around.

Baxi is offering one lucky *Your Home* reader the chance to win an EcoBlue boiler of their choice, including installation, worth up to £2,500.

The range, launched last autumn, comes with incredible eco credentials that, according to the Energy Saving Trust, can save you up to £300 a year on your energy bills. Baxi also offers market-leading warranties with their boilers, including a 10-year warranty on the Baxi EcoBlue Advance Combi, giving you extra peace of mind throughout the year.





As Baxi's most reliable boiler yet, the Baxi EcoBlue comes in a variety of different outputs and models to suit the needs of any household. As well as being energy-efficient, Baxi EcoBlue is lightweight and compact, with some models able to be discreetly tucked away in a kitchen cupboard. What's more, Baxi's website provides a wealth of advice to help you save more money – from an online energy-efficiency calculator to help manage your energy bills, to top tips on simple maintenance that will help keep those winter worries at bay.

For more information on how Baxi can save you money, visit www.baxi.co.uk.

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win, simply answer the following question:

Q: What is the name of Baxi's eco-friendly boiler?

A) EcoPink B) EcoBlue C) EcoOrange

To enter, call our competition line

0901 819 1258*

To enter online visit www.yourhomemagazine.co.uk

To enter by text message text **YHCOMP5** followed by a space then your name, address and answer to **87080****

**Texts cost 50p, calls cost 26ppm* and last approx. 2 mins.

Closing date: 31st May 2015 and three working days later for online entries.

RULES OF COMPETITION ENTRY

*Calls cost 26p per minute and last approx. 2 minutes. Calls from mobiles may vary. **Texts cost 50p plus your standard network charge. This is not a subscription service. Lines close at midnight on 31st May 2015 and three working days later for online entries. The winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received after the closing date. If you call to enter after the advertised closing date you will not be entered into the competition, but you may still be charged. 1. Hubert Burda Media UK may use your details to let you know about other products and services we think may be of interest to you. If you do not want offers from us, please end your text message with BURDA NO. 2. The competition is open to anyone in the UK over the age of 18, apart from employees of Hubert Burda Media UK, Spoke and any other companies or company employees involved in the competition. 3. Unless otherwise stated prizes include delivery to the UK mainland but not installation or removal of existing appliances or products. 4. No cash alternative is available and products will not be changed or upgraded, but should the prize become unavailable Your Home has the right to offer an alternative prize. 5. Only one online entry per giveaway per person. 6. Winners must be willing to participate in publicity if required. 7. Proof of postage is not proof of receipt. 8. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 9. Unless otherwise stated prizes must be claimed within six months. 10. Holidays and breaks are subject to availability at the time of booking and unless otherwise stated do not include travel, insurance or extras. 11. Reproduction of this competition in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Hubert Burda Media UK reserves the right to prosecute any offending parties. 12. Allow 8 -10 weeks from selection for completion. 13. Entrants are asked to provide their full name and address when entering the competition. SP: Spoke – 0333 202 3390.

TERMS & CONDITIONS One boiler (either the EcoBlue Advance Heat, the EcoBlue Heat, the EcoBlue Combi, the EcoBlue Advanced Combi or the EcoBlue System) will be provided to the homeowner at an output to match the winner's requirements. The prize of a Baxi boiler is only open to homeowners with an existing mains gas supply to their home. The prize will include installation, which is to be carried out by a Gas Safe Registered installer, up to the value of £2,500 (including price of boiler, installation and VAT) and not including any additional charges outside of the boiler installation, such as replacement radiators or re-decoration of the area the boiler was previously cited. Prize is valid for a year from the date of the draw, and the prize will be withdrawn if not claimed within this period. Baxi reserves the right to amend or alter the terms of competitions and reject entries. A redraw will take place if the prize has not been claimed within four weeks of the winner being contacted.

Property know-how with George

This month property developer, architect and presenter of Channel 4's The Restoration Man, **George Clarke**, takes a look at your home's crowning glory – the roof



Photo Darren Chung **Additional image** iStock

The roof of your home is probably the most important part of the building fabric (well apart from the foundations) because the roof offers the most protection from the elements. A roof also needs to be thermally insulated to a very high level, because, as you know, heat rises and there is a considerable amount of heat lost through your roof. But, the roof is also one of the most aesthetic elements of a building; it is the hat that gives a home its character. You only need to see how the character and look of a person changes when they wear a different hat to realise how much a roof can affect the design of a home.

The most common roof type is the traditional pitched roof, which goes back over thousands of years. It is one of the simplest and most successful roofs because its triangular form is incredibly strong (structural engineers love triangles), its slope allows rain and snow to fall off daily and it is relatively cheap and easy to build. The roof pitch also creates a great void within that allows the perfect opportunity to do loft and roof extensions to gain another room in your house. Loft conversions are still one of the most affordable ways of adding more space to your home and it's also one of the best rooms in the house making the most of the available natural light and you get the best views. Make sure you obtain planning permission or use your permitted development rights before starting any work.



▲ **A typical suburban roofscape showing tiled roofs with T-intersections**

I've been lucky enough to live in a number of different style homes that have very different roof types. My mum's house, where I grew up, was a late 1960s mono-pitched roof, which was a very low angle, single plane roof. Unfortunately it had very little insulation in the roof and asbestos tiles so it wasn't long before it had to be replaced. The house was always freezing!

My first flat as a student had a mansard roof, which I always thought felt more Parisian in style. This was at the very top of a tall terrace and would have traditionally been used as servants' quarters for a wealthy family back in the day. A mansard roof is one of my favourite shapes as it is packed with romance and character.

My current home is a post-war modernist building, which I'm just about to start a major renovation on, and has a very tired looking flat roof. It is under insulated; it's pretty ugly to look at and has areas of 'ponding'. Ponding is where the flat roof begins to distort and undulate over the years leaving small ponds of stagnant water in certain areas. This can be a big problem because it means the temperature of the roof surface will vary a lot between the areas which are dry and those which are wet, and because every material expands and contracts at a different rate it can cause cracking of the roof membrane near the ponding areas. I've submitted a planning application to remove the roof and add a new roof top extension, but even if the planning approval doesn't come through for the additional space I will still need a good roofing contractor to come in and replace the existing roof. Flat roof technology in the 21st-century is so much better than it was in the 1960s and 70s. I think I was mentally scarred by some of the flat roof buildings I spent time in growing up. The roof of my school would leak all of the time and I don't even want to discuss how bad the flat-roofed portakabins we used to use as temporary classrooms were. But, material technology is so much better now than it was then and it is so easy to get fantastic flat roof systems with long, insurance-backed guarantees, so my new flat roof project should last at least another 50 years.

The finished material choice of your roof is as important as the shape. Slate and lead roofs are great for more traditional buildings, but new green roofs seem to be the ecological choice of the day. Who would have thought that growing flora, herbs and grass on the roofs of our buildings would be so popular?

So, whether you're updating or changing the shape and materials of your existing house, or exploring the opportunities available to you on a new-build home, the overall design of your roof is critical to the overall look and beauty of your home. You need to make sure you get it right and it should never be compromised on. Good luck!

■ **For more tips and advice from George, check out his website at www.georgeclarke.com**


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Gardening

Helpful hints and top buys to keep your garden growing



Jobs to do this month

- Prune topiary to keep nice and neat
- Cut runners from strawberry plants
- Harden off young plants before planting out, once soil is warm
- Keep clearing weeds as they appear

James Wong's top tips for easier gardening

James Wong has teamed up with tool expert, Fiskars, and tells us about his top tools for getting your garden in order…

- A light pruning of fruit trees in summer lets in more light to the developing crop. Trials have shown that this can make them measurably sweeter, double antioxidant content and intensify colour. Fiskars super-ergonomic PowerGear™ pruners have a rolling handle mechanism that makes pruning a breeze.
- Lopping triggers the production of plant growth hormones, which can supercharge the vigour of old or ailing shrubs and trees, helping to rejuvenate plants. With the, frankly ridiculous, reach of Fiskars Tree Pruners, no branch is too high.
- Research has shown that planting trees in square, not round, holes leads to much faster establishment and long term health – the pointed corners of the square help direct roots outwards to colonise the surrounding soil much faster, instead of spiralling round and round the trunk. Fiskars samurai-sharp digging spade slices through soil in an instant, even through heavy clay. Extra long, über lightweight handles create the perfect fulcrum to make digging easier.

Pitch-perfect grass



If you have a household of wannabe footballers then the chances are your lawn isn't looking at its best. Used on football pitches around the world, Green Velvet lawn seed is now, thankfully, available for domestic gardens. With six varieties in the range there's a solution for every garden, including Emergency Life Saver, a quick-fix for repairs which can germinate at 3.5 degrees in just 3-5 days, and The Action Hero, a hard-wearing mix that will withstand a whole team of footballers. Prices start from £6.99 for enough to cover 15 square metres.

Events

7th - 10th May
RHS Malvern Spring Festival, Malvern Showground, Worcestershire www.rhs.org.uk

19th - 23rd May
Chelsea Flower Show, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London, SW3 www.rhs.org.uk

29th - 31st May
Gardening Scotland, The Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh, Scotland www.gardeningscotland.com

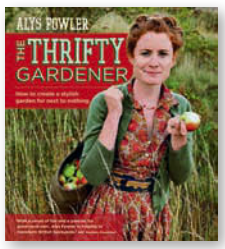
3 OF THE BEST... new gardening books

An unusual book showing you how to grow everything you need for a particular dish, in just one container.



One-pot Gourmet Gardener by Cinead McTernan, £16.99, Frances Lincoln Publishers. Publish date 2nd April

BBC presenter, Alys Fowler, shows you how to build a stylish garden for next to nothing using clever DIY and upcycling skills.



The Thrifty Gardener by Alys Fowler, £16.99, Kyle Books. Publish date 9th April

An in-depth guide to starting a garden from scratch including hard and soft landscaping, planting and aftercare.



First-Time Gardener by Frances Tophill, £16.99, Kyle Books. Publish date 16th April

Feature Laura Higgins

FOR MORE EXPERT ADVICE AND INSPIRATION GO TO WWW.YOURHOMEMAGAZINE.CO.UK



Pots laden with spring bulbs are a great way to brighten up your garden while waiting for your borders to get into full swing

Feature Kate Harding

Image iBulb

Going potty

Planting in containers is an ever-popular way of bringing a cascade of colour into our homes and gardens

Pots overflowing with flowers and fruits will make a great addition to any garden or home and are ideal for small spaces, such as balconies and patios, as well as being a great way to introduce pockets of colour in drab corners.



Raspberry 'Ruby Beauty' from £9.99, Thompson & Morgan

Getting started

To begin with, you need to decide what type of pot you want to work with. Essentially anything that is waterproof with a hole in the base for drainage will work, so don't be afraid to think outside the box. The rising trend for upcycling has seen everyday items such as metal colanders and steel baths turned into quirky planters. Here's a rundown on the most common materials and some key things to consider:

TERRACOTTA

For a classic look terracotta is hard to beat, however, if you are planning on leaving it outside all year round be sure to opt for frost-proof, rather than frost-resistant pots. As it's a porous material, soil can dry out faster than when in other types of pot, however, choosing one with a glazed finish should help to minimise this.

PLASTIC

This tends to be a much more affordable option especially when looking at the larger sizes. They are also much lighter than the alternatives so ideal for large plants which you need to move around on occasion, plus they retain moisture well. You can also now buy plastic pots that have been disguised as terracotta or stone. The downside is that they aren't particularly good at protecting tender plant roots in the depths of winter.

◀ **Exclusive to Thompson & Morgan, the thornless patio raspberry 'Ruby Beauty' is a dwarf variety that is ideally suited to life in a pot**



Skyplanter, £14.99, Harrod Horticultural

▲ **This planter literally turns gardening on its head – with its clever irrigation system you can suspend plants upside down**

METAL

Galvanised metal containers will look perfectly at home in a contemporary setting and, as with plastic, they are lighter than stone or terracotta and are good at retaining moisture. However, they can get hot on sunny days and in extreme cases risk scorching plant roots.

WOOD

If recycling an old crate or box is free, and when you fancy a change, wooden containers can be painted in a wide spectrum of colours to suit.

What to plant

There are a great number of plants that love life in pots and with gardens becoming more and more compact this approach to gardening allows you to grow what you love on a smaller scale.

If you don't have the luxury of a large vegetable plot in your garden, yet you'd still like to enjoy homegrown produce, pots offer the perfect compromise, as there are a huge number of varieties that grow happily in this situation without taking up too much room. Equally hanging baskets can be used to grow plants with small fruits, such as tomatoes and strawberries. When choosing what you want to grow you will need to take into account the size of the pots you have. A general rule of thumb is the larger the fruits your plants will bear the bigger the pot you'll need and root vegetables need deep pots to allow them to reach their fullest potential. However, there are many dwarf varieties that are ideally suited to growing in average-sized pots, so flick through seed catalogues and look out for varieties that have been bred specifically to thrive in containers.

Top tip

Help prevent pots from becoming waterlogged by placing feet underneath the base, to lift off the floor and allow excess water to drain away.



An old painted wooden ladder makes an ideal pot stand that you can update with seasonal displays

Image iBulb



Line up your favourite containers on a bench that receives a decent amount of sun to create a pocket of colour

Image iBulb

Now to planting

Once you've settled on your pot and plant, what soil you use is very important. For a short-term display of annuals a multi-purpose compost should suffice, while for a more permanent set-up a soil-based compost will be better. You can make your own simply by mixing two-parts garden soil with one part garden compost. For extra sustenance add a fertiliser, as directed on the packet, and add in moisture retaining granules. For plants with fussier requirements, such as lime-hating rhododendrons and azaleas, you will need more specific soil, in this instance a lime-free ericaceous compost. If in doubt check the plant label or ask your local garden centre.

It's best to plant up your pots in early spring as this gives roots the chance to establish themselves, so they are much more able to cope, before the hot weather arrives. To prevent soil being washed away or clogging the drainage holes you will need to place a layer of either stones, broken pots, known as crocks, or pieces of polystyrene at the base.

Take your plant from the pot and loosen the root ball, place enough of the compost in the new pot so that the top of the root ball is level with the top of the compost. Fill any gaps with more compost and gently firm down, then give the pot a good soaking to allow everything to settle. If necessary add more compost after the water has drained away. However, be mindful that you should leave a gap of about 2.5cm at the top of the pot to allow water to soak in rather than run off. If you are creating a display from more than one plant, the general rule is to place taller plants in the centre and low-growing, trailing plants at the edges.

If you are planting bulbs for seasonal interest a great way to get the maximum impact from just one pot is to create a continuous cycle of colour by layering bulbs, also known as lasagne planting. To create a display that takes you through the months with an ever-changing display couldn't be simpler. In autumn take a deep pot and fill the base with your chosen drainage matter, then top with a layer of multi-purpose compost. On top of this place your first layer of bulbs, these will be the last to flower, so opt for something that emerges in late spring/early summer, such as tulips or hyacinths. Make sure the bulbs aren't touching each other or the sides of the pot, then cover with more compost, then add a layer of the second bulbs to emerge in mid-spring, such as daffodils, cover as before then move on to the third layer which will be early flowering spring bulbs, such as crocus or snowdrops.



As seen at last year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, vintage suitcases make interesting planters that can be stacked for added impact

Image Lizzie Orme

Keeping your pots in tip-top condition

Lack of water is one of the common downfalls with container gardening, so don't allow your plants to fall victim. As the supply of water and nutrients in pots is heavily reliant on us knowing what to do and when, it's important to understand the basics. The most essential thing is not to let the compost dry out. Also during growing season plants will be absorbing nutrients from the soil at a steady rate, so ensure you top the soil up with the relevant fertiliser for your plants. During the summer you will most likely need to water once a day, however, on windy or extremely hot days you may need to water more. To test whether the compost is in need of water insert your finger into the soil, if it's dry below the surface you need to water, if it's damp then you don't. Using a watering can or hose, direct water at the soil, avoiding the foliage as much as is practical and leave until you can see water pouring out of the drainage holes at the base of the planter. A frequent mistake is to assume that because it's been raining you won't need to water pots, however, you should always check the soil, as a pot's position can mean rainfall doesn't reach the pot's surface or the plant's own foliage deflects water away from the soil.

If you're going on holiday a friend or neighbour may be willing to come round to water while you're away. Alternatively there are a number of irrigation systems, varying in complexity and price, that can be set up to ensure regular watering while you're on holiday.



Image Lizzie Orme

▲ **Hanging baskets aren't just for summer. For autumn interest, plant heuchera in various striking shades**

Top tip

Pot plant stands are a great way to get maximum productivity from a small space such as a patio or balcony.



▶ **A trendy terrarium will make a fabulous feature in your home**

Image Urban Botanist

Freshen up

Replace top soil with a layer of fresh compost in the early spring for a boost before the flowering season begins in earnest. For plants that have outgrown their surroundings you will need to re-pot. Signs that your plant is ready to be repotted, or has become pot-bound, include the root system poking out of the bottom of the pot. While it may be tempting to transfer your plant to a much larger pot, it's advisable to only go up one pot size every time you re-pot, rather than have a mass of soil around a small root ball.



Image Lizzie Orme

▲ **Planting a citrus tree in an easy-to-carry container means you can pick it up and move it to the shelter of a greenhouse or conservatory when the weather turns colder**

Plants in glass houses

Creating an indoor display with plants in glass containers, known as terrariums, has recently emerged as a big trend. With a number of different containers and plants to choose from, Lucy Serafi, from The Urban Botanist, walks us through the basics:

- The first step is to decide where you are going to keep your terrarium. Plants suited to life under glass will generally do better in some natural light, though preferably not direct sunlight, so consider this when deciding where to display your creation.
- Once you have chosen your spot the next step is deciding on the size and shape of your terrarium. This is the fun bit. Do you want it to hang or sit on a flat surface? Do you want a modern and contemporary look or a more traditional one?
- Then comes deciding on a colour scheme for the gravel and other accessories. If going for a more contemporary look, monochrome white and black gravel looks great, perhaps with some slate pieces for decoration. Alternatively, if a more natural look is desired, natural browns and neutral tones are perfect. Other natural decorative features can include bark pieces, driftwood or reindeer moss.
- Now to the final piece of the jigsaw, the plants. Succulents, air plants and cacti are especially great options for terrariums. They look really dramatic and the shapes tend to look stunning in the beautiful glassware, but best of all they are simple to look after. The main point to remember with all these plants is that over-watering will kill them, as they will simply rot. Only water very sparingly about once a week, or less in the winter. When watering succulents and cacti, water the soil and not their leaves. With air plants it is better to take them out of the terrarium itself to water, as they prefer to be spritzed, and you don't want to end up with water marks on the inside of the glass.
- The Urban Botanist supplies fully-assembled terrariums, as well as DIY kits with all the components you need to make one yourself. Prices range from £9.95 to £69.95.



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WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

We have £6,050 worth of fab prizes up for grabs!

Win a bathroom makeover from Croydex

Transforming your bathroom can be as simple as changing the accessories. A splash of colour, smart storage solutions and a new toilet seat can completely change its look and feel.

Croydex is offering one lucky *Your Home* reader the chance to win a spring makeover, worth over £750. The prize includes a water-saving Aqua Air overhead shower with shower arm, a stylish aluminium mirrored cabinet, a brightly-coloured shower curtain and toilet seat, a space-saving curved shower rod, two vibrant bath mats and a selection of Flexi-Fix products.



1 great prize

For more information on Croydex, visit www.croydex.com.

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TEXT ENTRY OPTION! Text YHGIVE1 followed by a space then your name and address to 87080. Texts cost 50p.**

☎0901 819 0681* Calls cost 26p per min

Win kids' bedroom furniture from HelloHome

HelloHome's new kids' bedroom ranges combine fun design with stylish touches that parents will love. The BearHug and StarBright collections offer age-appropriate toddler beds designed to ensure the smooth transition from cot to bed, and complementary bedroom furniture to complete the look.



We have three HelloHome BearHug bedroom sets, worth £250, to give away, consisting of a toddler bed, toy box, stack storage and desk.

3 fab prizes

To find out more, and get hints and tips from 60 Minute Makeover designer Leah Hughes, visit www.worldsapart.com/our-brands/hellohome.

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Win a Draper Tools decorating bundle



Draper Tools is offering ten lucky winners a brilliant decorating prize pack worth £150.

This handy prize includes the compact 23039 Tri-Palm Sander, ideal for achieving a professional finish when sanding awkward areas. Winners will also get their hands on the impressive Draper Tools 20502 Hammer Drill, which features a powerful 1010W motor, two-speed full metal gearbox and variable speed control.

To help you achieve perfect painting results, there is the 26220 Draper expert five-piece paint brush set and the essential 30942 laminated cotton dust sheet too.





Start turning your home improvement plans into reality with this practical prize bundle from Draper Tools.

Visit www.drapertools.com or for stockist details call 023 8049 4333.

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10 lucky winners



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WIN! ✶ WIN! ✶ WIN! ✶ WIN! ✶ WIN! ✶

Win a stylish shower from Triton

5 fantastic prizes



We've teamed up with leading shower company, Triton, to offer five lucky readers the chance to win a stylish Unichrome Nene Diverter mixer shower with body jets, worth £300.

Featuring an overhead deluge shower, a five-mode detachable shower head and three two-mode body jets, the Nene Diverter shower takes luxury showering to the next level and is a striking addition to any bathroom space.

Controlling the shower is also really easy – simply adjust the flow with a separate lever which directs the diverter aspect of the shower easily and efficiently.

Whether you are completely renovating or simply want to refresh your bathroom, you can rely on Triton's Nene Diverter shower to add a touch of glamour thanks to the spa-style features and premium design.

For further information visit www.tritonshowers.co.uk

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Win Protek woodcare

10 great prizes



Create a gorgeous garden by protecting all areas of exterior timber using Protek's range of woodcare products, available in over 100 stunning colours.

All garden wood needs protection and the addition of colour, whether it's neutral, bright or pastel, will create a stylish garden to enjoy all year round.

Garden plants, pets and wildlife will benefit too as Protek products are water-based and manufactured with environmentally considerate processes and raw materials.

10 lucky readers will each win £75 to spend online at www.protekwoodstain.co.uk to get their garden ready for summer.

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TEXT ENTRY OPTION! Text YHGIVE5 followed by a space then your name and address to 87080. Texts cost 50p.**

Terms and conditions: prize does not include delivery, which must be paid for by the winners.

PROTEK

☎0901 819 0685* Calls cost 26p per min

Win a Gorenje fridge freezer

1 lucky winner



Leading home appliance manufacturer Gorenje is giving one lucky *Your Home* reader the chance to bag a stylish Retro Chic Black free standing refrigerator, worth £800.

The Retro Chic combines minimalism and elegance to make this statement refrigerator a modern classic. It also provides all the benefits of modern technology, boasting 'A++' energy ratings and a SuperCool function, making the Retro the perfect marriage of nostalgic styling and modern cooling innovation.

For more information visit www.gorenje.co.uk.

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TEXT ENTRY OPTION! Text YHGIVE6 followed by a space then your name and address to 87080. Texts cost 50p.**

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To enter: Phone or text your name and address for the prize you would like to win or enter online at www.yourhomemagazine.co.uk. Phone and text entries must reach us by midnight on 31st May 2015, and three working days later for online entries. *Calls cost 26p per minute and last approx. 2 minutes. Calls from mobiles may vary. **Texts cost 50p plus your standard network charge. This is not a subscription service. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received after the closing date. If you call to enter after the advertised closing date you will not be entered into the competition, but you may still be charged. **RULES:** 1) Hubert Burda Media UK may use your details to let you know about other products and services we think may be of interest to you. If you do not want offers from us, please end your text message with BURDA NO. 2) The competition is open to anyone in the UK over the age of 18, apart from employees of Hubert Burda Media UK, Spoke and any other companies involved in the competition. 3) Unless otherwise stated prizes include delivery to the UK mainland but not installation or removal of existing appliances or products. 4) No cash alternative is available and products will not be changed or upgraded, but should the prize become unavailable Your Home has the right to offer an alternative prize. 5) Only one online entry per giveaway per person. 6) Winners must be willing to participate in publicity if required. 7) Proof of postage is not proof of receipt. 8) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 9) Unless otherwise stated prizes must be claimed within six months. 10) Holidays and breaks are subject to availability at the time of booking and unless otherwise stated do not include travel, insurance or extras. 11) Reproduction of this competition in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Hubert Burda Media UK reserves the right to prosecute any offending parties. 12) Allow 8 -10 weeks from selection for completion. 13) Entrants are asked to provide their full name and address when entering the competition. SP: Spoke – 0333 202 3390.

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"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. I have now had seventeen books published with two more under publication at the moment."





Jane Isaac, Northamptonshire
When I started the Writers Bureau course, I wanted to explore avenues for my writing and develop and strengthen my personal style. I had no idea that it would lead to me being a published writer of novels and short stories. I still pinch myself when I receive emails and messages from readers who've enjoyed my work or when I give talks to book clubs and visit bookstores to do signings. These are magical moments that have changed my life – my dream has come true."

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We all know first impressions count for a lot, and hall appeal is most definitely the new kerb appeal, as a stylish hallway can make a real style statement in any home. To create a lasting impression with your hallway, why not upgrade your staircase? This may seem like a long and difficult task, but changing stairparts is actually much quicker and more hassle-free than you might think.

The Richard Burbidge ranges come with comprehensive installation instructions, which can be completed within 2 days. Certain ranges also feature pre-drilled hand and baserails, making updating stairparts as simple as giving a room a new lick of paint.

*For T&Cs please visit www.richardburbidgepromotions.com

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Eco news

Discover the latest eco-friendly buys and advice

Hit the deck

Before you head down to your local DIY store to pick out your decking boards, why not consider Trex composite decking instead? Made up of more than 95% recycled materials, including things like recycled plastic and wood scraps, Trex decking is great for the environment and really easy to maintain too. Unlike traditional decking, you won't need to stain or paint it and you'll only need to use soap and water to keep it clean and looking its best. Prices start from £75 per square metre with lots of different colour options available.

Transcend decking in spiced rum, £75 per sq m, Trex



Feel good fashion

'Fashionable' is the last word that springs to mind when you think of old bouncy castles and deckchairs, but eco pioneers, Wyatt & Jack, have changed our minds completely. The UK-based company uses vinyl PVC from old bouncy castles and unwanted deckchair canvas to make gorgeous bags and purses, with the option to search for a bag based on which area or beach the raw materials came from. Because the bags are made with left over fabrics, a lot of the designs are limited editions or completely unique too. We love the Sophia cosmetic bag, which is the perfect size for a bank holiday weekend away and a little treat to yourself that you needn't feel guilty about.



Sophia cosmetic make up bag, £16.95, Wyatt & Jack

Doggy business

When it comes to being eco-friendly, there's no excuse not to get the whole family involved – including the pets. The Clean Green Dog Loo is a natural, hygienic way of getting rid of dog waste that sits discretely in your back garden. The circular container is buried into your lawn so that the lid sits at ground level, and works by turning any solid waste into liquid with the help of a bioactivator, natural enzyme capsule. The liquid is then hygienically flushed into the surrounding soil through the drainage slots and all you need to do is top up the enzyme capsules and water each week, leaving you one less thing to worry about.



Clean green dog loo, £24.99, Good Boy

Eco expert



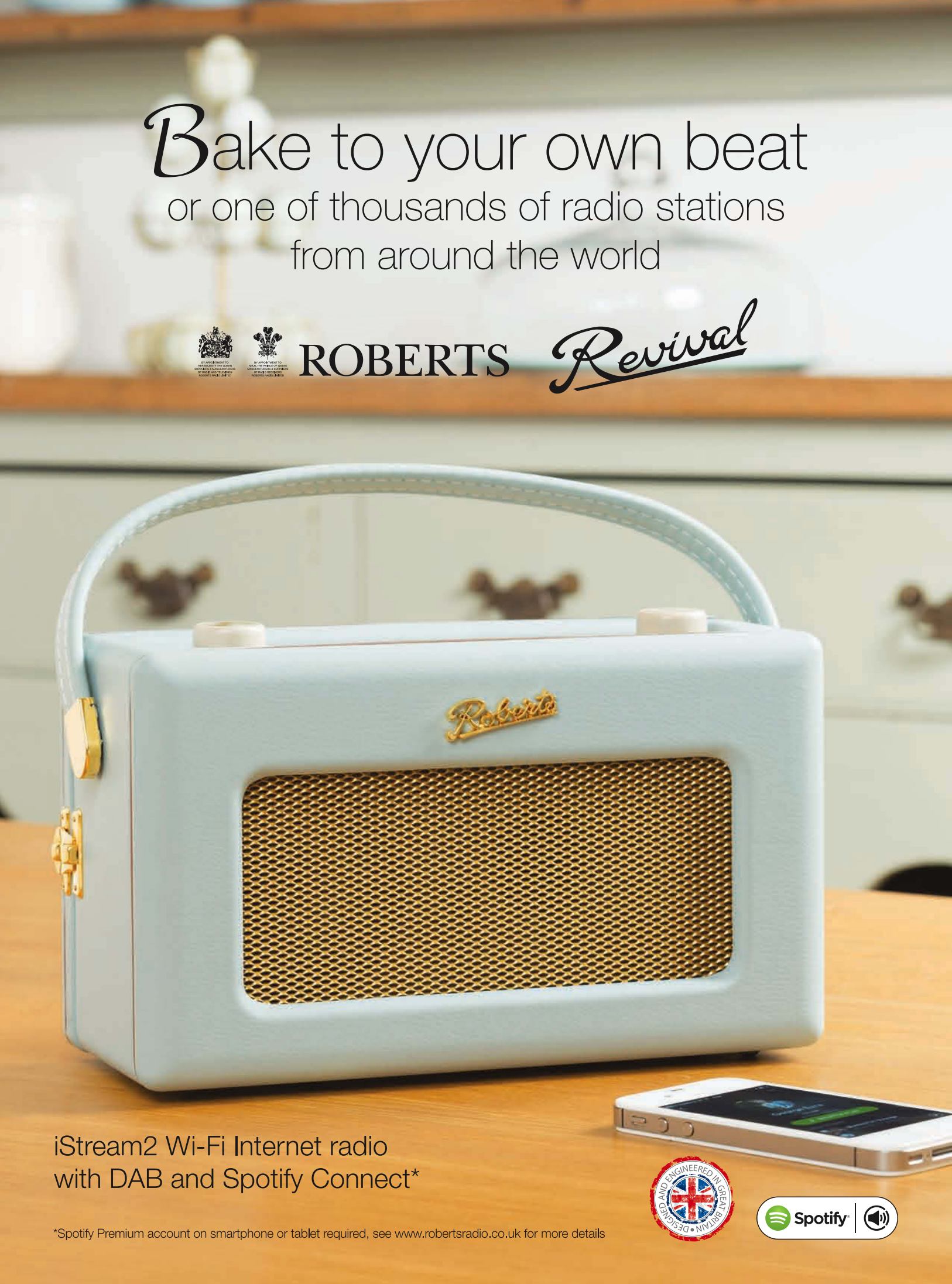
Chantal Pearce, Head of Buying at Tesco Outdoor Living, tells us how you can make your gardening more eco-friendly

'It's so easy to make small changes to your gardening routine that will not only reduce the impact it has on the environment, but also on your utility bills. A water butt is a really simple way to make your gardening even greener by saving rain water during wet weather. A traditional old-style wooden barrel design will make an attractive addition to your garden, while a water butt pump makes for quick use of any collected water. Saving rain water to nurture your plants offers a completely green solution to watering the garden and most models require minimal self-assembly, making them a fuss-free, eco-friendly option.'

WEBSITE WATCH... www.responsibletravel.com



If you're planning to get away this bank holiday, or are already searching for your perfect summer break, take a look at www.responsibletravel.com for a holiday you can feel good about long after you get home. The online travel agent offers only eco-friendly and socially responsible holidays, so whether you're looking for the holiday of a lifetime or just a cottage hideaway for the weekend, you can relax in the knowledge that your trip is as green as it can be.


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